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INTERVIEW SPECIAL

THE OFFICE, LIGHTHOUSE
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RETURN TO
POWER MINERS



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ISSUE 97 // 2022

MEET THE TEAM



EDITOR // GRAHAM HANCOCK

A LEGO expert who can't remember life without the brick, Graham loves using that knowledge to bring Blocks to the shelf every single month.



BUILD EXPERT AND HISTORIAN // DANIEL KONSTANSKI

Lifelong LEGO obsessive passionate about collecting. With a thorough knowledge of LEGO over the years, he is Blocks' historian.



BUILD SPECIALIST // SIMON PICKARD

Our experienced MOC expert who is a regular on the show circuit. If there's a way to build it, then he can show you how.



PHOTOGRAPHER // PHIL WRIGHTON

Models never look better than when this prize winning LEGO photographer has worked his magic to produce beautiful Blocks covers.



REVIEWS WRITER // KAT-REES JAUKE

Kat uses her LEGO knowledge to cast a discerning eye over the latest sets to see if they are satisfying to build and look impressive on display.



REVIEWS WRITER // DAVE CARTLIDGE

Whether it's from Marvel Super Heroes, Friends, Technic or any other theme, Dave has the LEGO know-how to assess the latest sets.

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WELCOME



Cover Pic: Rob Damiano

**I DON'T
THINK WE'VE
EVER HEARD
FROM THIS
MANY LEGO
CREATIVES IN A
SINGLE ISSUE
BEFORE**

If you love finding out how LEGO sets are designed, then this issue of Blocks magazine has you covered. I don't think we've ever heard from this many professional LEGO creatives in a single issue before, so get ready to go deep into how the magic happens.

It's almost an Ideas special, as the designers behind the recent run of sets give us the inside scoop – you can learn how the team made The Office's dull location interesting to build and how Motorised Lighthouse upped the scale from the fan design. Most fascinating of all though is the journey that Table Football went on – that interview really does reveal what happens when the design process is particularly challenging.

As the front cover gives away though, there's an even larger set that we have the story behind. Design Master Marco Bessa explains how they took the iconic Hogwarts Express to a new scale that would be worthy of fans' collections. As a huge Potterhead himself, his enthusiasm for the project shines through.

Once you've heard from the experts though it's always fun to tackle a build project yourself and we have a great one this month – a lunar landscape for the Galaxy Explorer. Whether you have the set already or have it at the top of your list for Santa, this is the perfect way to display the modern Classic Space model.

Leg godt!

Graham Hancock

Editor // graham@blocksmag.com

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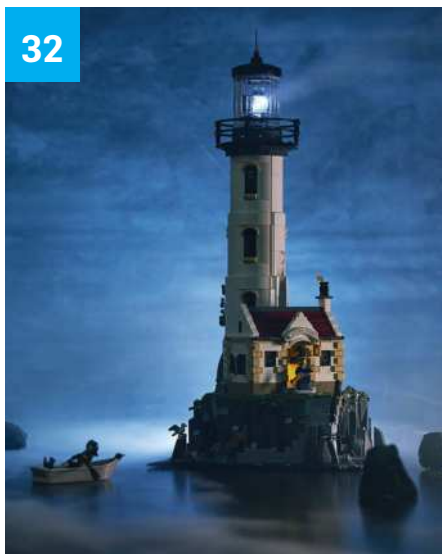
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Subscribe to Blocks magazine today to be in with a chance of winning **76405 HOGWARTS EXPRESS – COLLECTORS' EDITION**. You'll also be automatically entered into our monthly prize draws to win the latest and greatest LEGO sets. See **page 79** now!



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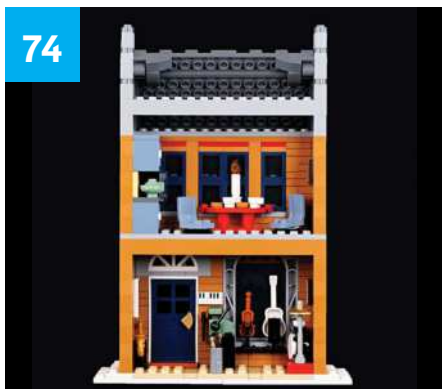
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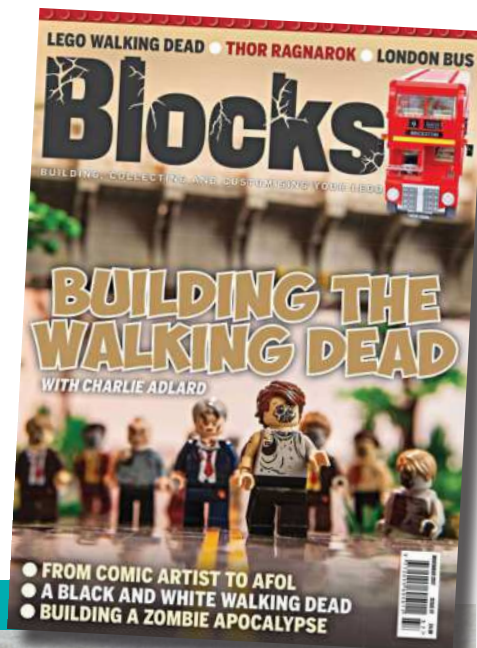


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Rounding up the brick conversation each month. E-mail graham@blocksmag.com to share your views

FIVE YEARS AGO THIS MONTH...

The Walking Dead made for a spooky cover, with special builds recreating classic comic book pages inside.

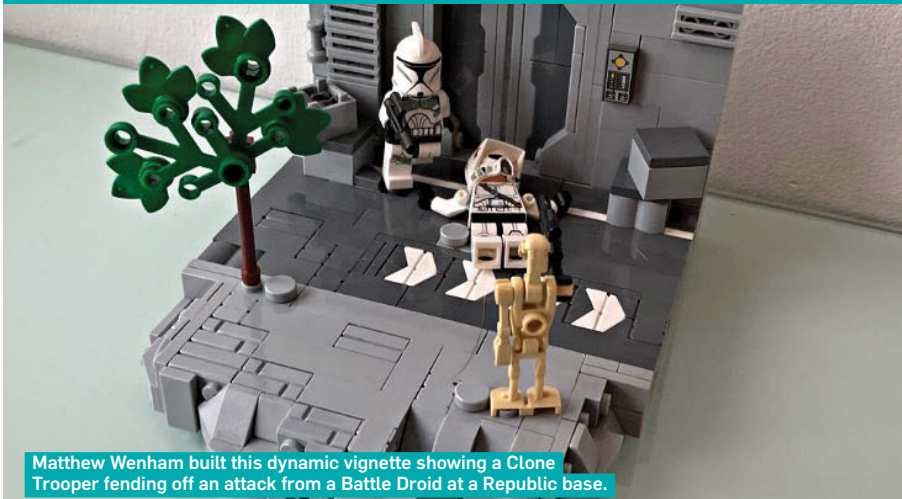


BUILD SPOTLIGHT



Felix Doyle, aged 12, built this fantastic tractor and plough over a weekend. There's very inventive use of the parts that he had on hand to put this fun MOC together.

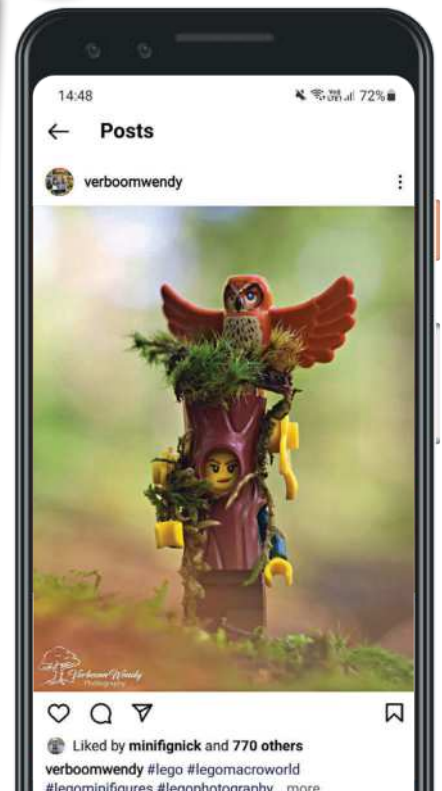
BUILD SPOTLIGHT



Matthew Wenham built this dynamic vignette showing a Clone Trooper fending off an attack from a Battle Droid at a Republic base.



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**DEAR BLOCKS,**

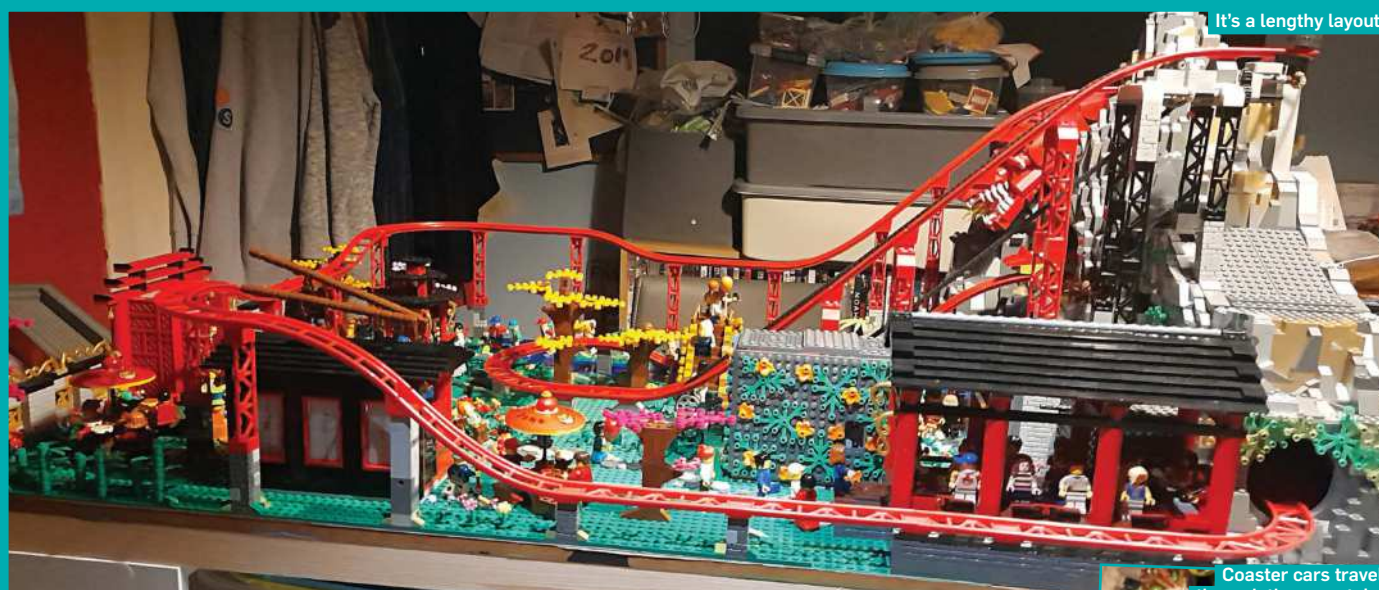
As a family we have built a huge roller coaster. It has two chain lifts, a dragon, a mountain, a waterfall and so much more. Our 11-year-old LEGO obsessed daughter Kimi helped so much with this.

My wife Kirsty also helped, we are all LEGO lovers in truth, possibly down to my obsession. I have always had a fascination with oriental buildings and gardens but my wallet has limited how many I can buy. We all sat down and thought up a project we could all build together. The time we all had together between work and home life limited how often we could all build together, but we completed it.

The design is all my own except from the chain drives for the roller coaster. It stands at 11,065 parts in full count. Between the three of us we sketched out things we wanted to include and I thought up the best possible way to build them. By far the best and most fun part was the noodle bar (Kimi's favourite too as she loves noodles) and the most challenging by far was finding all the parts as this is built from my spares and bulk buys.

Michael Currie

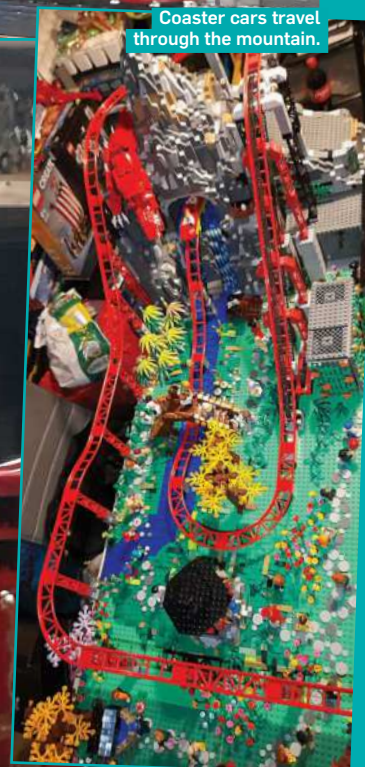
I think everyone seeing this is going to be envious Michael – what an incredible setup! There's something so fun about builds with motion, especially when they are built at an epic scale like this. It's also lovely when a project gets the family involved, thanks so much for sharing this build – Graham



It's a lengthy layout.



There's a dragon at the back.



Coaster cars travel through the mountain.

THIS IS THE UCS WAY

A modern Star Wars icon gets the big, budget busting treatment in 75331 The Razor Crest





This is the
largest LEGO
Razor Crest
yet.

MODERN STAR WARS projects always get a mixed reception – so it was something of an anomaly in 2019 when *The Mandalorian* proved a hit with audiences around the world, with few gripes from the dedicated fandom. Din Djarin himself, Baby 'Grogu' Yoda and the Razor Crest became instant icons in the same way Darth Maul did when he was introduced to the saga in 1999.

That gives an indication as to why the LEGO Star Wars team are willing to taking a risk with 75331 *The Razor Crest* – it's the first time that these super-sized Ultimate Collector Series models have gone beyond the safe territory of the classic trilogy. With 6,187 pieces and a commensurate price tag, this is a build for the most dedicated Mando fans.

Model Designer César Soares has clearly aimed to deliver an accurate rendition of the ship to satisfy those collectors, with an almost entirely tiled exterior and several interior areas with space to play in. There's an opening landing ramp, escape pod and landing gear so this

**I WANTED IT TO BE
ULTRA-DETAILED SO THAT
EVERY STAR WARS AND
LEGO FAN CAN ENJOY
DISCOVERING ALL THE
EXCITING FEATURES**

massive model does more than just sit on a shelf.

'It was amazing to design *The Mandalorian's* Razor Crest in brick form! I wanted it to be ultra-detailed so that every Star Wars and LEGO fan can enjoy discovering all the exciting features – from the carbon freezing chamber to the escape pod. I know that fans of the Star Wars galaxy, builders and more will love recreating their favourite adventures from this extraordinary series,' César said.

Different episodes of the series are referenced, with little touches including the container of eggs and Boba Fett's armour. It would be wise for Star Wars fans to keep the model away from their Jawa minifigures, unless they want to have some serious rebuilding to do.

Naturally Din Djarin and Grogu are included to give life to the model, with two new minifigures joining them – Mythrol and Kuiil. There's a buildable Blurrig for Kuiil to ride and a pram for the little green guy. The press release generously describes an 'innovative' display stand for the characters to be placed on. ■

75331 THE RAZOR CREST IS AVAILABLE NOW.

WINTER LEGO RELEASES

A selection of new adult sets has launched in time for the holiday shopping season

76215 BLACK PANTHER

Released in time for Black Panther: Wakanda Forever, this enormous bust of King T'Challa makes for a unique display piece that pays tribute to the character as well as actor Chadwick Boseman, who tragically passed away at the age of 43.

The model is made up of 2,961 elements, with most of the visible ones in black. To portray the vibranium layer beneath, the interior bricks are predominantly purple and blue. Black Panther's arms are included and can be displayed in the iconic 'Wakanda Forever' pose.

'The 1x2 plates are in transparent purple so even where they're visible, like in the fingers and on the arms, you might not immediately notice them, but when you're walking around the model you get those little glimpses of transparent purple and that means you've got that magical vibranium feel to it,' said Senior Model Designer Mark Stafford.

76215 BLACK PANTHER IS AVAILABLE NOW.



10308 HOLIDAY MAIN STREET

The annual Christmas tradition of a Winter Village Collection set continues with 10308 Holiday Main Street, a set that hints at a traditional downtown road with two shops and a trolley car. As ever, the festive location has a dusting of snow. It's scaled down from what has been offered in previous years, with shallower buildings allowing the design team to include two instead of one.

'The annual LEGO Winter Village sets are one of my all-time favourite holiday traditions,' said LEGO Creative Lead Jamie Berard. 'The Holiday Main Street brings together a whole downtown of activity and imagination into one set. Building as an individual or as a family, you'll discover a model with all the hustle and bustle of a festive shopping street – complete with trolley, snow topped shops and children posting letters.'

10308 HOLIDAY MAIN STREET IS AVAILABLE NOW.



■ SET OF THE MONTH // FANTASY ADVENTURE RIDE

Bricktober continues to exist in some parts of the world as a special promotion that the LEGO Group runs with Toys R Us. This year, four exclusive sets are available to fans lucky enough to live in locations where it's happening. The Fantasy Adventure Ride is the silliest and therefore the most interesting by far.

■ BOOK OF THE MONTH // LEGO HEROES

There's a book coming next year from Blocks Editor Graham Hancock [that is available to pre-order now]. It's different from LEGO books that have come before, with real-life stories about how people have used LEGO bricks to change the world.



21337 TABLE FOOTBALL

It seems that there's always a new LEGO Ideas set available, with 21337 Table Football the latest fan-conceived model to be joining the theme. Donát Fehérvári built the original version that was selected for release as an official set. It's scaled down from his concept (see page 42 for the fascinating story behind that), but still offers the opportunity for a competitive game of five-a-side.

To really make some noise around the set's launch, the LEGO Group recruited Thierry Henry and Marcus Rashford for the promotional campaign. 'Throughout my career I've played football everywhere you can imagine – from my garden to stadiums across the world and now in a LEGO Ideas Table Football set,' said Thierry. 'LEGO play is all about harnessing the unifying spirit of sport to rebuild the game for fans everywhere. I am very excited to see the new LEGO set bring people together across the world as they master the table football game in brick form.'

As well as providing enough players for the pitch, the set also includes extras so that fans can build the squad they want to play with. In total, 22 minifigures can be built at one time, with a mix of heads and hairstyles offering plenty of choice.

21337 TABLE FOOTBALL IS AVAILABLE NOW.

76210 HULKBUSTER

Back in 2018, the LEGO Group launched 76105 The Hulkbuster: Ultron Edition, a towering 25cm tall rendition of the Hulkbuster armour seen on screen in *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. Unless you've been stuck in a cave building yourself a suit of armour to escape with, you'll have noticed that adult LEGO sets have gotten larger since then.

76210 Hulkbuster is twice as tall as that previous version and uses a massive 4,049 pieces to convey the heavy-duty armour. That quantity of bricks gives the impression of some real heft to the build, which is based on the memorable sequence in which Iron Man attempts to stop the Hulk from getting carried away. Three light bricks add extra life to the model, which features articulated joints. The set is compatible with 76206 Iron Man Figure, who can sit inside the mech's cockpit.

Marvel fans either have some tough decisions this Christmas or will have to ask Tony Stark for a loan.

76210 HULKBUSTER WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM NOVEMBER 4. ■



NEWS IN BRIEF

■ MORE IDEAS

Another 51 fan-designed LEGO product ideas are now under review by the LEGO Group, with the fan submissions each having reached 10,000 votes on the Ideas platform. As usual there's a mix of locations, vehicles, objects, real-life, fantasy, original concepts and movie inspired builds.

■ FAMILY BUILD

A new Target exclusive Ideas set will be based on the theme of family, with four fan-designed models having been selected for other LEGO enthusiasts to choose between.

There's a vacation scene, a dimensional holiday snap, buildable frames and a family tree – whichever wins the vote will become a set.

■ TREE PLANTING

In Vietnam, the LEGO Group is planting 50,000 trees over three years. It's to make up for the 25,000 trees that will be cut down to make space for the company's new factory in Binh Duong province. Seven different types of trees native to Vietnam will be planted across multiple locations near the factory.

■ BRICKTALES RELEASE

Bricktales is a new puzzle-solving video game that will see players building their way through LEGO environments as they rebuild a dilapidated amusement park. The new title has launched on a range of platforms including PC, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S and Nintendo Switch.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

LEGO Ideas is looking for fans to inspire a special set that commemorates 50 years of Dungeons & Dragons

The Dungeons & Dragons set will celebrate 50 years of the game.



THE LATEST LEGO Ideas brief is the first time that the platform has specifically asked for submissions based on a licensed property – fans are being asked to submit builds that celebrate 50 years of Dungeons & Dragons. Models will be selected and put to a fan vote, with a chance of being selected for release as an official set in 2024.

It's another surprise as Dungeons & Dragons is part of Wizards of the Coast, which is owned by Hasbro – it seems that LEGO 10302 Optimus Prime was just the beginning of the partnership between the two toy giants.

'The Venn diagram of Dungeons & Dragons fans who are also LEGO fans is enormous,'

Design Manager Jordan Scott told Blocks. 'They have at least 50 million fans of Dungeon

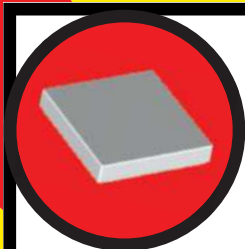
THE VENN DIAGRAM OF DUNGEONS & DRAGONS FANS WHO ARE ALSO LEGO FANS IS ENORMOUS

& Dragons worldwide. We also have millions of fans worldwide. We can already see Facebook groups and things of people building their own characters in LEGO minifigures to use them. I

did that personally before I shifted to miniatures. There's such a natural fit between the two. We really want to see how people showcase that in their models and submissions.'

The brief is to celebrate 50 years of Dungeons & Dragons; so the model could be based on a specific storyline, capture a certain location, recreate a particular creature or even just feel like it is part of that world.

Builders have until November 14 to submit their models to LEGO Ideas. The Wizards of the Coast team will work with the LEGO Group to sift through the entries. There will be a fan vote a few weeks later, then the selected model will be announced in December. ■



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BLOCKS BOOKS GIFT GUIDE

Christmas is the perfect time to expand your LEGO bookshelf, with a selection of new titles available in time for the holiday

LEGO IN FOCUS

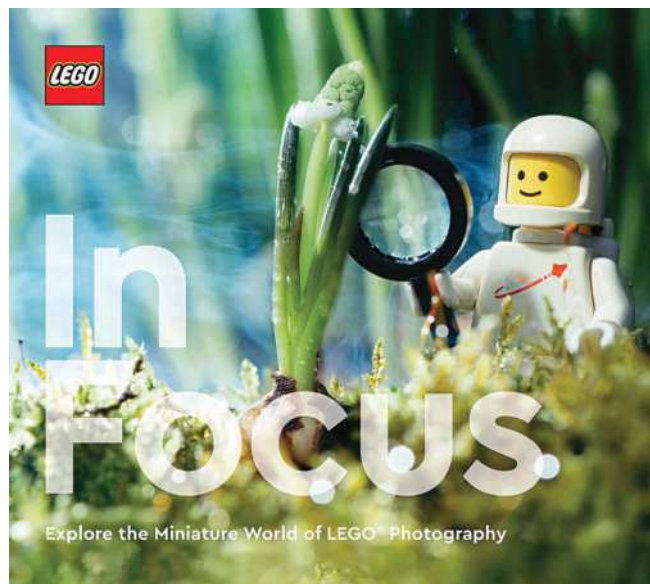
STUCK IN PLASTIC AND BRICK CENTRAL

£22.99, \$30.00

CHRONICLE BOOKS

If you have spent any time exploring LEGO content online, you will have come across beautiful minifigure photography. There's a good chance that much of what you have seen belongs to members of Stuck in Plastic or Brick Central, two communities of like-minded LEGO snappers. The photographers in these online groupings clearly find inspiration from one another, as they consistently create incredible images.

This beautiful coffee table book presents more than 100 photographs from the two communities and it is really nice to be able to sit and peruse the images in print. While it's great looking at these pictures on a device, it's much nicer to see them given this kind of presentation. There is huge variety within the title, reflecting the variety found within the LEGO photography world. For many of the images, the photographers have provided a little context for how they created them, which only enhances your appreciation of what you're looking at.



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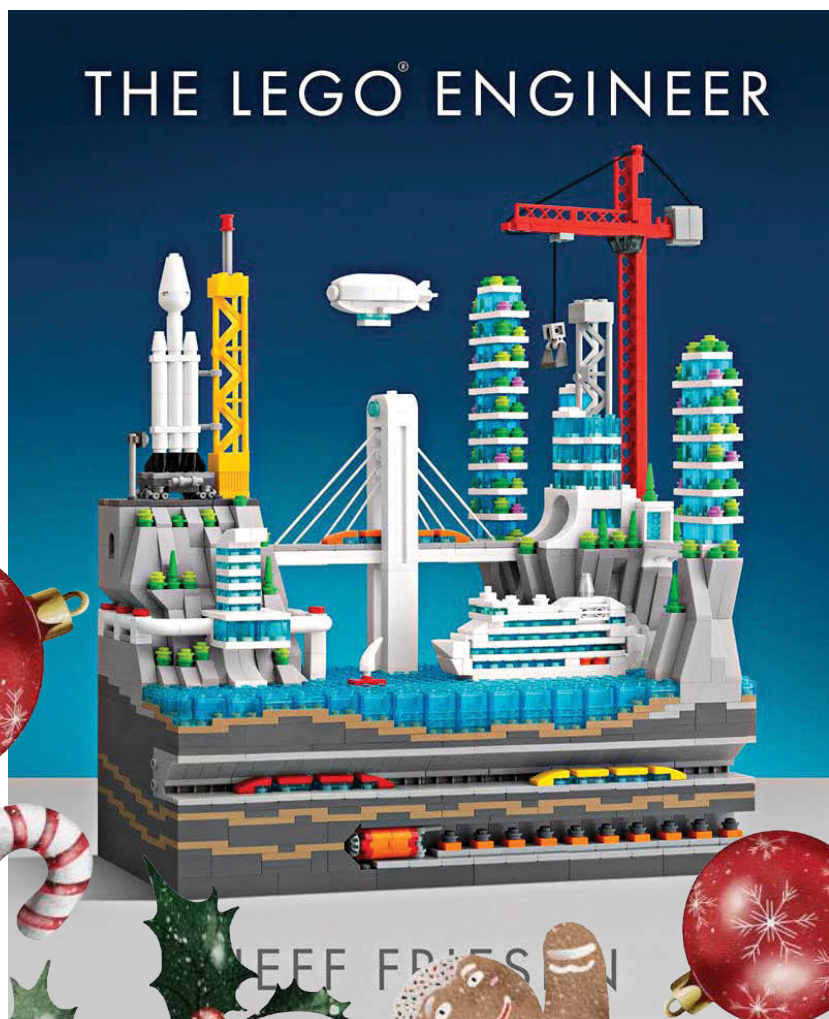
JEFF FRIESEN

£22.99, \$24.99

NO STARCH PRESS

This is a wonderfully surprising book; the cover hints at the various types of engineering-based LEGO build instructions you will find inside, but in actual fact this isn't simply a collection of step-by-step instructions. While there are instructions for specific builds, the book contextualises each model within the world of engineering; for example, the section on boats presents a specific vessel and highlights some of the clever engineering behind it, before presenting a version to build using LEGO elements.

The level of information provided makes it a great book for dipping in and out of, while the builds offer a nice range of subject matter – not only are the models varied, but some require just a handful of pieces so are achievable if you just want to construct something small. If you enjoy building things from the real world, this is worth adding to the bookshelf.



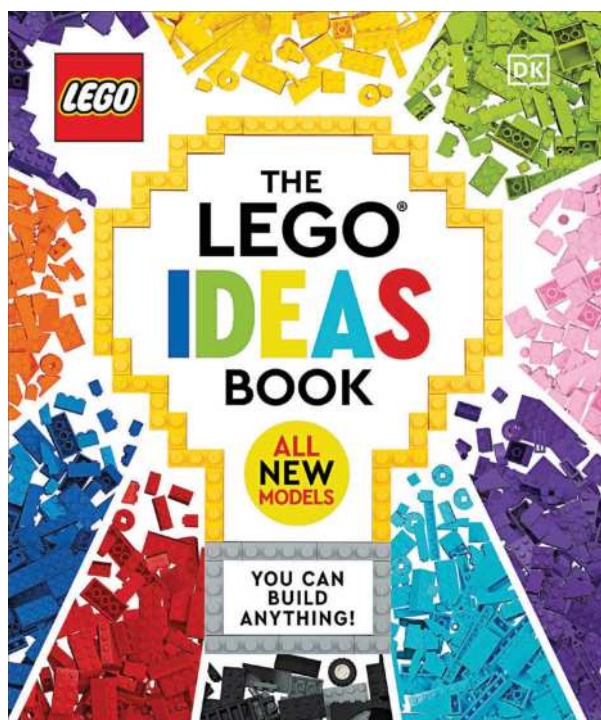


■ PART OF THE MONTH // 3D PRINTED WOODEN DUCK

Just when San Diego Comic Con goes by without exclusive LEGO sets, an even more limited exclusive crops up. During AFOL Day at LEGO House, which ties in with Skærbæk Fan Weekend, a special 3D printed piece inspired by the Wooden Duck was offered. It has a moving beak and was distributed as a gift with purchase, leading to a long line for LEGO House's shop.

■ MINIFIGURE OF THE MONTH // THE MYTHROL

In the opening of Star Wars: The Mandalorian, The Mythrol helped set the tone for the series. Din Djarin's first on-screen bounty brought humour and Star Wars Holiday Special references to the show before finding himself frozen in carbonite. The character is now available as a minifigure in 75331 The Razor Crest.



THE LEGO IDEAS BOOK

SIMON HUGO ET AL

£19.99, \$24.99

DK

In this case, you can certainly judge a book by its cover. This updated edition of The LEGO Ideas Book is absolutely packed with inspiration, as the cover makes clear. It's aimed at children, but there are some great tips for older builders too. All of the 200 pages are covered in text and images that will either give you a direct model to replicate or a spark that will give you a concept to build yourself.

Many of the builds in this book have been provided by members of the AFOL community, so the standard is high. This is where it holds appeal for adults as well as children; there are tips and tricks within these builds that will be replicable in your own models.

Different themed sections present builds on specific topics – the four broad categories are Build Your World, Go Explore, Express Yourself and Awesome Adventures. What's really neat is that within each section there are builds at different levels of complexity, with some quick and easy, then others that will require a bit more time and thought.

GETTING STARTED WITH LEGO

MINDSTORMS

MASTERING LEGO MINDSTORMS

BARBARA BRATZEL AND ROB TOROK

£16.99, \$19.99

NO STARCH PRESS

If you're looking to get serious about LEGO MINDSTORMS, it's something well worth buying a book about. 51515 Robot Inventor doesn't come cheap, so it's worth investing a bit further to make sure you get the best possible use from it. These two titles are presented as textbooks and really benefit from that format. The Getting Started book really does start from the beginning, demonstrating how to use the app and showing how to put together bare bones robots. Beyond this though, as the sections become more advanced, there continues to be instructions, examples and illustrations to make the concepts underpinning MINDSTORMS very digestible.

Once you're ready to go beyond what the LEGO MINDSTORMS app offers, the Mastering title provides instructions for using Python to program robots. This really gets deeper into coding for anyone who is familiar with MINDSTORMS but wants to start programming more sophisticated robots. ■



NEWS IN BRIEF

■ MINI ASTRONAUTS

LEGO minifigures will launch into space – for real. Two minifigures from LEGO Education SPIKE Prime will be onboard the (otherwise) unmanned Artemis I when it launches this year. NASA's spacecraft will orbit the Moon and conduct scientific research.

■ WAKANDA FOREVER

Three minifigure scale LEGO sets have launched to coincide with Black Panther: Wakanda Forever, the sequel to one of Marvel's biggest hits. Between the models, they offer quite the cast of characters – although some of the guys from Avatar seem to have wandered in by mistake. The movie will reveal all on November 11.

■ LEGOLAND BELGIUM

Merlin Entertainments Group has reached an agreement with local stakeholders SOGEPA, SFPI and SORESIC to build a LEGOLAND Resort in the Wallonia region of Belgium. The estimated investment will be between €370 and €400 million, the second largest investment in the region in the last decade.

■ HIDDEN FOREVER

The app for LEGO Hidden Side will be discontinued in 2023, so now is the time to download if you want to use it. It allows builders to see a spooky transformation and go ghost hunting once they have built sets from the retired theme that was part of the LEGO Group's 'fluid play' strategy.

TOP TEN

LEGO CHRISTMAS SETS

The biggest holiday of the year is arriving and it's time to get out the classic festive LEGO sets; here are some of the best official Christmas models released so far

Words: Anthony Walker-Cook Pics: The LEGO Group

10. 40410 CHARLES DICKENS TRIBUTE

Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is arguably the archetypal Christmas story, yet there has only ever been one gift with purchase representation of this famous novel. This small tableau captures the end of the novel, when Scrooge goes to offer the Cratchit family some help, but what's lovely about the set is its base, which has been made to look like a copy of the novel itself. The bare and impoverished Cratchit home accentuates the novel's focus on the importance of charity, a message that to this day is lost amidst the consumerist takeover of the festive period.



10

9



9. 10267 GINGERBREAD HOUSE

Making gingerbread houses is a Christmas tradition for many families, so why not do so in LEGO form? This distinctive build puts forward an alternative vision of the Winter Village series that's no less cute (especially given the baby gingerbread tile). The frosted windows add to the candy theme, and so much of this aesthetic is blended into the build (for example, the cookie drawer handles) so successfully, it's almost saccharine. The set also asks a metaphysical question – what happens to a gingerbread person when they have a bath? Only owners of the set will know the answer.

8. 40338 CHRISTMAS TREE

Each year families around the world debate when is too early to put up their Christmas tree. Whilst there have been Christmas trees in many of the Winter Village sets, 40338 Christmas Tree from 2019 makes for a wonderful standalone display piece. The green branches contrast with the varied decorations that come in a variety of shapes and colours. It's a shame this was a gift with purchase set, but fortunately this year's 40573 Christmas Tree offers a more accessible option.



8

7. 10293 SANTA'S VISIT

We've all been there on the night before Christmas, waiting for the man in red to visit. The nervous anticipation, hoping that your wish list made it to the North Pole intact. What a magical moment of childhood innocence 10293 Santa's Visit captures. The cottage itself is gorgeous from both the outside and inside, but especially the latter, which is tastefully furnished. The play feature of enabling Santa Clause to come down the chimney is also incredibly charming. This is a lovely, adorable set that truly reminds you of the spirit of Christmas and all the excitement it brings.



7

6



6. 40274 MR AND MRS CLAUS

Here they are, the power couple of the Christmas period, Mr and Mrs Claus in BrickHeadz form. Santa Claus is well done, with his white beard and distinctive hat, but Mrs Claus's dress is equally lovely, making very good use of the flower piece in reverse. Both models also have wonderful side builds, with Father Christmas surrounded by gifts and Mrs Claus waiting at home for her husband to return from a busy night at work. This makes for a characterful display piece that should be part of any festive decorations.

5. 40499 SANTA'S SLEIGH

40499 Santa's Sleigh could be informally know as 'the reindeer battle pack' – four of the glorious printed animals are included in this set, and a majestic group they make indeed. But that's not the only feature that recommends this set – the sleigh itself is grand with some stylish gold accents and a particularly fun numberplate. Sleighs have been included in other Winter Village sets, but never have they captured the scale that this set achieves, with the pit at the back for presents providing plenty of storage space. Plus, you can check the 'nice list' tile to see if you've made it.



4. 10275 ELF CLUB HOUSE

Where do elves go when they've finished in the workshop? It sounds like the beginning of a bad joke from a Christmas cracker, but 10275 Elf Club House gives an answer. Spend some time by the waffle oven or step outside and use the telescope to gaze at the stars. The bunk beds in the top of the house add a community feel to the set, with the elves all gathered to achieve one thing – to get that sack of gifts ready for the big day. It's an unusual location, but it's been rendered with such warmth and creativity it feels a natural addition to the snowy location sets.



3. 21330 HOME ALONE

For many families, Christmas hasn't quite arrived until they settle down to watch Home Alone, the 1990 film about a plucky and resourceful child defending his home against some petty crooks. Indeed, this magnificent set worthily captures how significant this film is for many. The doll house design works incredibly well, allowing fans to not only replicate Kevin's home defences but also, perhaps, to trial their own with some modifications. References abound throughout the set, which is decorated with a Christmas aesthetic, whilst the desirable and accurate minifigures mean that this is a must-buy for any fan of the classic movie.



2. 10245 SANTA'S WORKSHOP

It's the place where it all happens, so who hasn't wanted to sneak a look into Santa's workshop? This 2014 set captures the warmth and grandeur to be expected from such an important place, with the stained-glass window, an impressive clock and plinths all decorating the front of the build. Inside, it's a bustle of activity, with a toy-making workbench that's being busily maintained by elves whilst Santa makes the final preparations for the night from his opulent chair. Meanwhile Mrs Claus has a tray of cookies for everyone – the perfect snack for a respite during a very busy time.



1. LEGO ADVENT CALENDARS

Advent calendars have been a part of the LEGO holiday offering since 1998, and since then they've increased in complexity and diversified by moving into various themes. Regardless of whether you prefer classic City or like to mix things up with Star Wars or Harry Potter, the advent calendars often offer the fantastic opportunity to build a little something with LEGO bricks every single day. Whether you're creating a festive scene for the Friends characters, finding Darth Vader dressed as Santa Claus or building Groot as a Christmas tree, these are an annual LEGO highlight.

KAT REES-JAUKE

BUILDING BONDS

Kat finds a new way to connect to the brick – and fellow fans – while building 76218 Sanctum Sanctorum

WHEN 76218 SANCTUM Sanctorum was announced at LEGO Con 2022, I knew my wallet was done for. Everything about the Marvel set called to me, from its selection of exclusive minifigures to its beautiful architectural design. A recent online deal allowed me to not turn to the Dark Hold and I got to enjoy building the set while watching the Doctor Strange movies.

Building can be quite a lonesome experience though. I actually understand why the LEGO Group has come up with Build Together instructions, to try and make it more interactive. However, I did something I'd never done before that really enhanced my build – I posted about it on Twitter.

I'm no viral celebrity. My social media usage is for posting LEGO related things, keeping up with movie news and watching cute dog videos. While any social media platform can have some drama, I've carved myself a comfortable corner of fellow nerds and geeks. Still, I have a very modest following of around 100, so when I posted a photo of the bags in a pile, quizzing about what the set could be, I wasn't exactly expecting a response. In comes one of my lovely followers who guesses right, and I thought I may as well continue. Suddenly, I wasn't just building by myself, for myself. I was finding the references and techniques to post about.

76218 has a whopping 18 bags of bricks, and there are a lot of references to find. This is a Marvel location that's seen throughout the multiverse, not limited to appearing in just the Doctor Strange movies. An Avengers reference appears almost right away with a brand-new Tesseract brick. I immediately had to show that off because new elements are always exciting. My followers agreed, the photo racking up more likes than I typically have. And I'm glad I photographed as I built because a lot of these cool details are later hidden or covered by other bricks. The only way I'd see these details again is if I took the Sanctum apart, and that's not happening anytime soon.

Being an avid photographer, I like a good aesthetic on my Twitter feed. I often paused the build to rotate the model to just the right angle or set up a minifigure in a really cool pose, all for the perfect shot to show off 76218 to its best.



KAT REES-JAUKE

Part of the Blocks review team, Kat uses her LEGO knowledge to cast a discerning eye over the latest sets.

This might not appeal to everyone, but I am a very fast builder, and slowing down to appreciate the progress actually helped me to not devour the set in a single sitting.

Building the set started conversations in the comments too. People were asking me what I

■ SLOWING DOWN TO APPRECIATE THE PROGRESS ACTUALLY HELPED ME TO NOT DEVOUR THE SET IN A SINGLE SITTING ■■

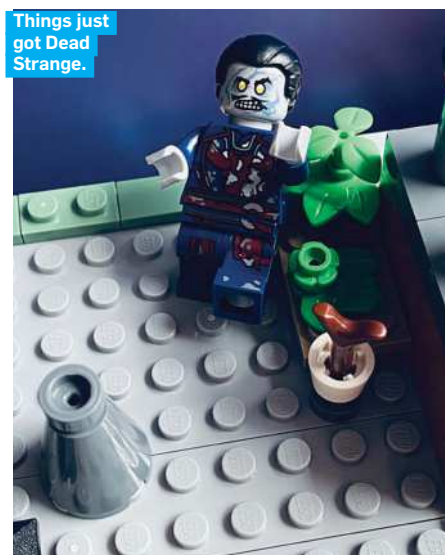
thought of the build or particular techniques. As a Blocks contributor I spend a lot of time writing about LEGO sets, but of course, I can't mention everything. Taking photos of even the smallest accessories, or pointing out the graphics on a certain sticker, meant that I could go into way more depth. In Doctor Strange, the Ancient One's most valuable lesson is that 'it's not about you', something which rang true for this build so much. It wasn't about me building this LEGO set. I didn't do a Sanctum selfie shot. It was about sharing the process and experience with others.

It helped with figuring out some of the

references too. My Marvel expertise is in no way as deep as my Star Wars knowledge. I've actually only been a Marvel fan for about a year (I know, I am very late to the party). When figuring out whether a galaxy-style sticker on the second floor was the Dark Dimension or the Gap Junction, my followers were happy to clarify. And there's one reference none of us could figure out! Outside the Sanctum Sanctorum is a newspaper stand for The Law Times, something which a fellow LEGO Marvel fan pointed out is also included in 76178 Daily Bugle. I'm still not sure whether this is a real New York newspaper or a deep-dive comics Easter egg I just don't recognise.

Posting on social media about LEGO isn't for everyone, and I totally respect that. Most of the time I just snap a quick shot of a completed build and I wouldn't want to do it for every set. 76218 Sanctum Sanctorum was a special case though due to its size and newness. There are few Marvel sets like it at the moment and with so much going on in the model there is a lot to talk about. It brought together us LEGO geeks and Marvel fans. But I definitely would do it again, as long as the set is big enough to warrant it, because it added something unexpected to the build and turned the experience into my own multiverse crossover event. ■

Follow Kat on Twitter @KatKylo





Swooping by the Sanctum.

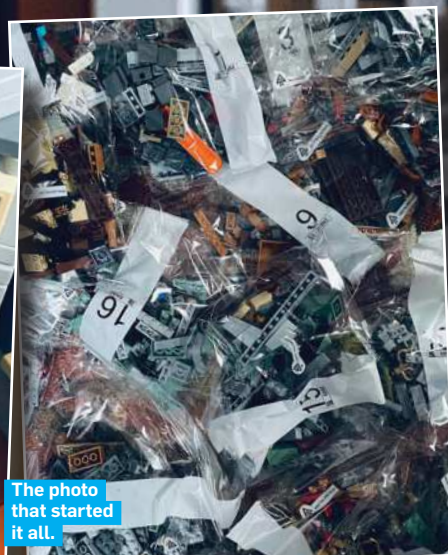
Everyone loves a shiny new brick.



What is Law Times?



A comfy armchair.



The photo that started it all.

DANIEL KONSTANSKI

REMEMBERING THE BIG PARTS

Certain pieces really sparked Daniel's enthusiasm as a child – has the LEGO System lost something by letting go of large specialised elements?

NOSTALGIA IS A funny thing. It's amazing how a particular smell or sound can immediately transport you back to a favourite place so vividly. Recently, while rummaging through a bin of random parts I recently acquired, nostalgia came for me in the form of stairs.

I pulled a staircase element from the bin, originally developed for Fabuland's slightly larger characters, that found a second life across several System scale products during the early 1990s. My childhood version, of which this was an identical copy, came with 6270 Forbidden Island, the original Pirates location set.

Today, as an AFOL, I can see all of its shortcomings. No studs on the steps so it looks out of place, impossible to use for anything but a staircase, not scaled to minifigures and requiring a large (so expensive) mould to produce. Despite all that, there was just something absolutely magical about having this part as a kid. Such size meant it had to come in a fairly big set so it was rare that you'd get one – and as a staircase it looked awesome.

For me, there are a handful of these parts. These elements inspired reverence and awe when I came to own them or saw them at a friend's house. Another was the large, quarter dome windows first introduced in the Futuron and Blacktron I lines. These were the ultimate status piece among LEGO Space fans in the late 1980s and early 1990s; they graced only the largest of Space sets. My generation's white whale was to acquire four of them so you could make the mythical enclosed dome.

I had a friend who managed to collect enough sets to pull off that feat and can remember distinctly seeing the enclosed space beneath two dark blue domes mixed with a pair of Ice Planet orange variants. It's not an exaggeration to say it seemed like holy ground to me; this was the ultimate Space collector's dream. I only managed to get two of them as a child, but years later as an adult I made my own enclosed dome as soon as I was far enough through my mission to collect 1990s Space sets. And rest assured, my dome was



DANIEL KONSTANSKI

Lifelong LEGO obsessive passionate about collecting. With a thorough knowledge of LEGO over the years, he is Blocks' historian.

made up of four parts of the same colour.

Long-time readers will not be surprised that the other special parts for me are the beautiful, moulded hull pieces that make up

SUCH SIZE MEANT IT HAD TO COME IN A FAIRLY BIG SET

LEGO ships. As a child, the dual challenge of limited income and my mom's moral objection to little Daniel playing with Pirates meant that only one ship made it into the collection; 6280 Armada Flagship. That set contained the smaller version of LEGO boat hulls, but I still found them entrancing. I can vividly remember joining the three bow, middle and stern sections together for the first time and audibly squealing with delight. Years later I would add every LEGO Pirates ship to my collection and delighted in joining a the hull pieces together each and every time.

I cannot say with certainty, but I don't think that there is a modern equivalent of this experience. There are so many more product lines that it is harder for individual pieces to

really stand out. Additionally, the LEGO Group has made a concerted effort to minimise the use of specialised parts. In the 1990s, before licensing and expansive storytelling, novelty was achieved through big, cool parts that stood out visually.

Today, much of the novelty factor is achieved through minifigures and unique storytelling elements that are often small. There isn't really an equivalent to the dome piece or ship hulls. Perhaps I would feel differently if I was a child in this era, but I think this experience of big, magical parts that were the main draw of a set is now largely a relic.

Objectively, this is a good thing as it means that components included in sets are far more versatile and designers have figured out amazing ways to build them into products of a much higher standard than those 1980s and 1990s models. But I am curious if the experience of ecstasy I felt as a kid when holding a big part for the first time has an equal today. My feeling is that it doesn't. ■

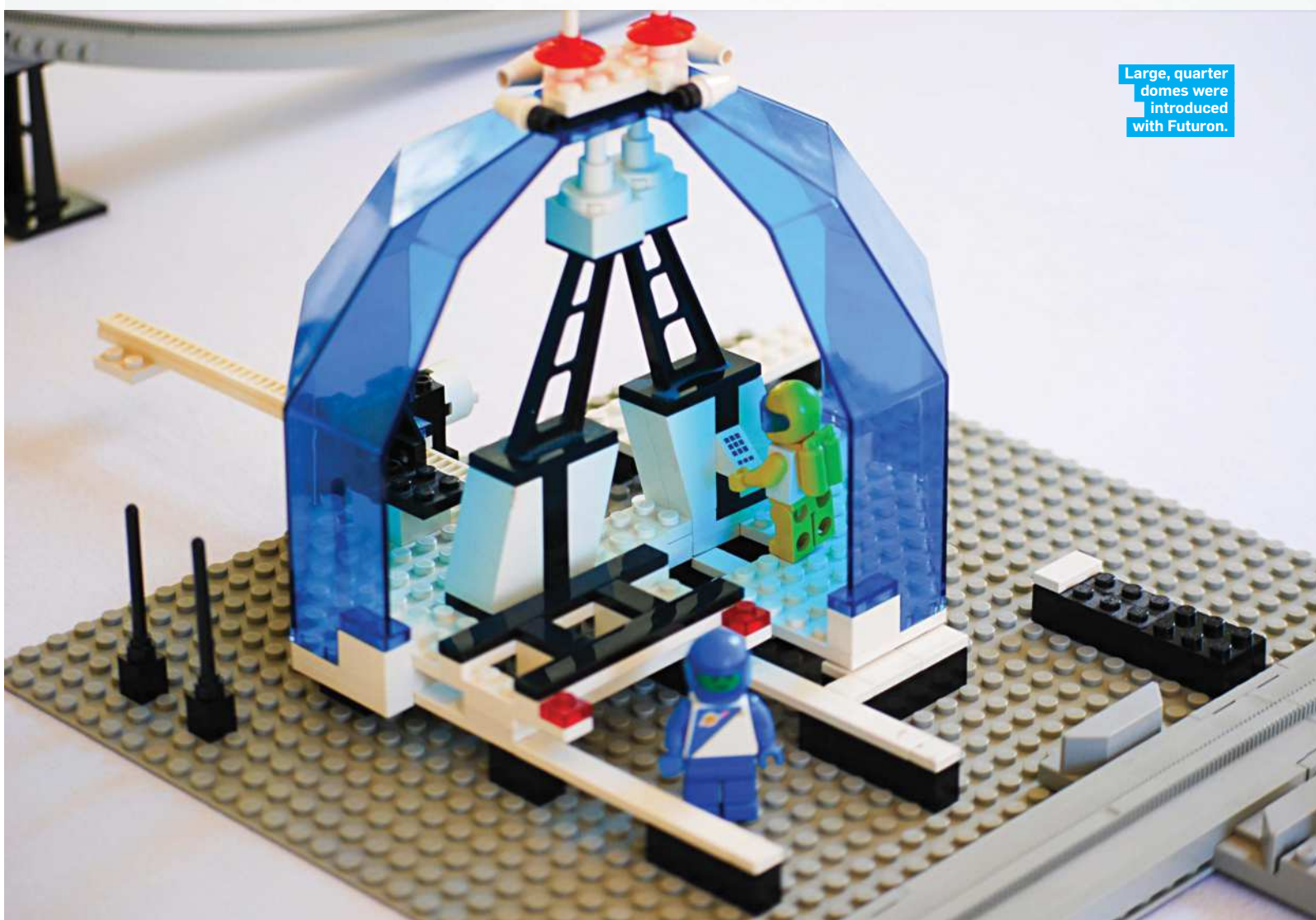


These stairs began life as a Fabuland element.

Daniel loved these boat hulls as a child.



Large, quarter domes were introduced with Futuron.



GRAHAM HANCOCK

INSPIRED AND ENERGISED

Graham finds himself full of LEGO energy at the end of a trip to the brick's hometown in Billund, Denmark

I'M WRITING THIS column in Billund Airport, waiting to return to the UK after a whirlwind three days in Denmark. From where I'm sitting I can see the LEGO brand store in the departures area (in a new twist, I also started the journey with a LEGO Store in Stansted). It has been an invigorating trip. Sometimes, sat at the desk every day, everything can feel quite abstract – but actually seeing the physical place where the LEGO experiences we enjoy are created and speaking face-to-face with people who I typically only email reinforces what underpins the hobby.

The reason for the trip was LEGO Fan Media Days, which I was eagerly anticipating in last month's column. As expected, hanging out with Daniel Konstanski was an absolute delight – we have worked together on this magazine for almost 100 issues, but have only hung out in person a handful of times. One interview in particular, that you'll read in an upcoming edition, was a very special one to conduct as a duo.

As well as seeing Daniel and prodding him to make sure he was real, I had the pleasure of meeting people who work on different platforms, many of whom I was familiar with as online avatars but not as actual physical people. Listening to the Tips n Bricks team talk about how they deliver shortform content through Instagram or getting a sense of how vlogs are created for Ashnflash's YouTube channel was fascinating. The challenges are very different to those we have in putting together a print magazine.

It's also great to see the familiar faces who are regulars at such events, like Huw from Brickset; he has been part of the community for a long time and always has interesting views on the state of play. Boris from Stuck in Plastic has been working on a book called LEGO Focus with his community and Brick Central, so having him show me that in person was also really nice.

The reason we were all there of course was to hear about what the LEGO Group has going on. There's a huge variety of work that goes on in Billund, which was illustrated by the different talks from TT Games, LEGO Ideas, the LEGO sustainability team and others. A talk by



GRAHAM HANCOCK

A LEGO expert who can't remember life without the brick, Graham loves using that knowledge to bring Blocks to the shelf every single month.

a representative from confidentiality though, was of course... confidential. For the most part though, you'll read about what we heard in the next few issues of Blocks magazine.

These talks were taking place in LEGO Campus, a series of interconnected buildings that have been under construction for a number

THE REASON WE WERE ALL THERE OF COURSE WAS TO HEAR ABOUT WHAT THE LEGO GROUP HAS GOING ON

of years. It's really fresh and playful, a much more fitting headquarters for the LEGO Group than the bland office blocks that were there before. Just being in such a distinctly LEGO environment was inspiring, with fan builds in the lobby a reminder of who makes all of this possible.

On the second day of the event, we spoke to specific LEGO design teams to hear about what they have been working on. You can read the interview with the LEGO Ideas crew from page 42 – they were incredibly candid about the

challenges in designing 21337 Table Football. Sometimes a particular conversation gives you more insight into the LEGO inner workings than you expected and this was definitely one of those occasions.

Some of the other interviews were conducted under embargo, as the products we were discussing have not yet been announced. It is of course exciting to see a brand-new LEGO set in real life, but you have to be quick to react because there is little opportunity to prepare questions.

Presentations, interviews, networking and a few other nuggets in between – it all sounds entirely straightforward. In actuality though, wrangling all of the different components, even just getting a suitable room booked in a large organisation, is a real challenge. The AFOL Engagement Team did a great job of arranging everything and ensuring it went smoothly. These are the people who support the global AFOL community and are hugely supportive of what we do at Blocks.

We stayed on in Billund for an additional day after Fan Media Days, which happened to be the very day that LEGO House opened five years ago. The Home of the Brick is an important location for LEGO fans, so it felt quite special to be there during that milestone. The trip involved a few additional meetings; we have some fantastic material coming up in Blocks magazine that I am sure everyone will enjoy.

Perhaps the most important thing of all though is that during our three days in Billund, I managed to get a few new silly photos for the collection. The drawback to Fan Media Days being virtual for a few years is that these photos were few and far between, so I made the most of being surrounded by backdrops and props again. ■

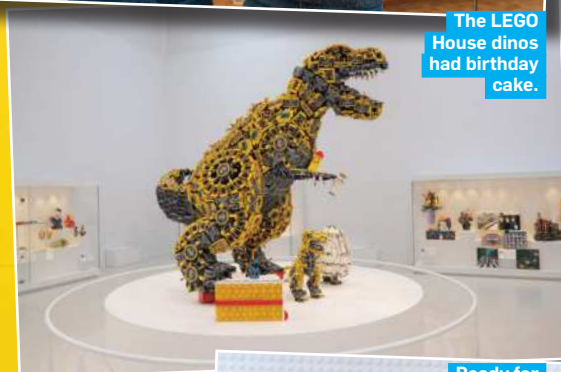


The entrance to LEGO Campus.

Let's go on
a LEGO® safari
adventure!



Graham and
Daniel; same
time, same
place.



The LEGO
House dinos
had birthday
cake.



Ready for
framing.



Apparently
Graham had
dressed for
the car.



Words: Kat Rees-Jauke Pics: Rob Damiano, the LEGO Group

A MAGICAL WAY TO TRAVEL

The Hogwarts Express is back on the LEGO track, bigger than ever before. Design experts Marcos Bessa and Andrew Seenan discuss how they used their magic to recreate the beloved train

Hogwarts Express
is making a
wintry journey.

WHILE THE GRAND, sweeping story of Harry Potter is beloved by fans for its deep world and detailed mythology, the part that initially hooks so many comes before the titular boy sets foot in Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry. It is the part of the first story when Harry understands that he has a greater calling than being stuck under the stairs and is heading to his new life, with all of the promise of magic and excitement that it offers.

It's why no tourist can pass through London without visiting King's Cross Station in the hope of finding Platform 9^{3/4}. While going to school for the first time is entirely relatable, finding a secret entrance to a train station platform and boarding a red steam engine is considerably more thrilling than the average first day experience.

This sense of wonder and joy makes the Hogwarts Express one of the most beloved icons of Harry Potter; it makes sense that the LEGO design team would explore it for the adult collection of sets that they expand on each year.

'It epitomises the world of Harry Potter in the way that it's such a relatable part of the world. I think there are a few icons within this universe that are so well known, and so loved, and the Hogwarts Express is one of them,' says LEGO Harry Potter Design Lead Andrew Seenan. 'It's one of the very first moments that Harry experiences being a wizard. Throughout the movies there are so many different scenes we see on the train as we follow Harry's development as a person. It's so ingrained within this world that we believe it deserves this special treatment.'

With 76405 being the sixth iteration of the Hogwarts Express, it's clear that the train is a fan-favourite stalwart. But with so many previous versions already released, it was up to Design Master Marcos Bessa to find something new to bring to this set – and his love of travelling via train definitely helped.

'As a kid, going on a train was always a very special occasion,' he explains. 'I would ride in a car, get on a bus... but getting on a train meant that I was going on a family trip somewhere. It was quite magical, in that sense. I think a lot of people might have similar experiences and relate to the train in that way as well.'

THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT SCENES WE SEE ON THE TRAIN AS WE FOLLOW HARRY'S DEVELOPMENT

This isn't just any train though; this is one of cinema's most famous trains. 'Like with any Harry Potter set there was a lot of digging for movie clips to revisit what is seen of the train,' Marcos explains. 'We have a library of images from the IP [intellectual property] partner as well as books we consult with production shots that shows things from the movie, details that maybe skipped through a bit too fast. There was also a bit of research on actual engines that served as inspiration for the Hogwarts Express, just to dig a bit more into the finer details, particularly on the engine car.'

Both the engine car and carriages were supplied by West Coast Railways for the filming of the Harry Potter movies. GWR 4900 5972 Olton

Hall was first built in 1937 and by the time that the books were being adapted into films had been restored to its original condition.

Looking into the train led to debate within the team as to what colour the Hogwarts Express is on screen, something that is affected by the lighting in different shots. While dark red was considered, Andy and Marcos agreed that the bright red is more

aesthetically pleasing on display and that it ties this version in with previous LEGO models. 'Dark red in particular has a tendency when it's used a lot together to read as brown,' explains Marcos. 'Would I rather have a train that sometimes looks brown or would I rather have a train that is red for sure?'

UPPING THE SCALE

With the designers' desire to offer a more detailed Hogwarts Express, including accessible interior sections, it was clear that it would need to be larger than previous, more toyetic versions of the train.

'I wondered, "What is the minimum width I can have two minifigures sitting side-by-side?"', says Marcos, indicating the interior seating design. 'Five studs is the bare minimum I needed. And then I wanted to make sure I had a corridor, so that I wouldn't just cheat my way into making cabins that aren't accessible from anywhere. That meant I needed eight studs and one stud on either side to make the walls; that makes ten studs. That then informed the rest of the scale of the model.'

Those stud measurements led to the new model being designed at 1:32 scale. While the LEGO design team has tackled many large builds, few are

The model requires a lengthy shelf.



There is a function in the set.



The beginning of the adventure.



Dementors arrive to cause trouble.



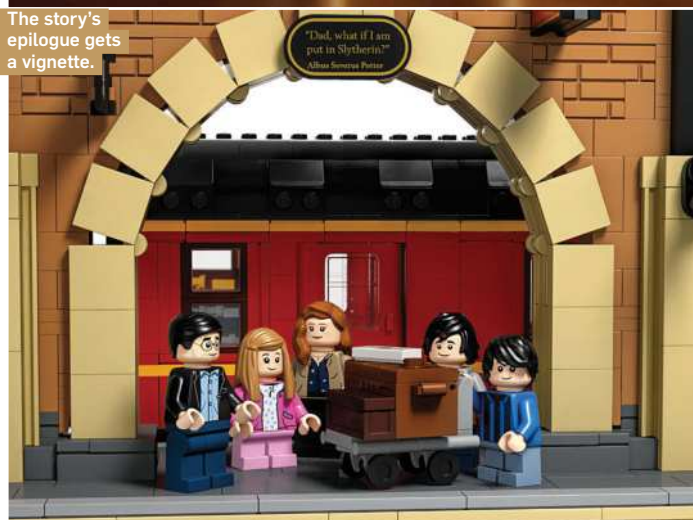
Luna Lovegood makes an appearance.



The platform provides space for Harry as a parent.



The story's epilogue gets a vignette.



Movie scenes are held within the cars.



as long as 76405 Hogwarts Express – Collectors' Edition would become. Rather than build, rebuild and rebuild again physically, Marcos decided to employ some digital wizardry.

'Because the model was so big, I didn't want to restart it all the time, so I chewed on ideas a lot more and worked digitally,' says Marcos. The digital domain helped him perfect the model while working from home, where he didn't have access to all the bricks he would usually have close at hand in Innovation House. 'There was a lot more exploration on the computer that allowed me to avoid building all of these physical copies. There were no more than three [physical] prototypes in total.'

'Our intention was to make the most detailed and accurate version we could of the train and with a particular focus to the inside of the passenger cars. It was going to be one of the key differentiators from all the previous versions of the Hogwarts Express.'

When building at this larger scale though, designers come closer to the limitations of the LEGO System and have to find ways to reinforce models. The weight and size puts much more strain on LEGO elements, something that the Design Master continuously had to take into account. 'You have to start making considerations you don't typically have in smaller builds. I had to put more focus on how heavy certain parts of the model were, especially on the wheels. I would say the pure scale of the build was the biggest challenge.'

This is also the reason the set isn't motorised. Every LEGO train has to undergo rigorous testing with motors, whether or not the set is actually going to include them as part of the final design. 'We very quickly realised that this is a scale that our system simply cannot support. First of all, the size of the wheels in combination with the engine means it overperforms and gets too fast, it just isn't meant for the platform of Power Functions we have. The weight of the model played a huge part in this as well because it is much heavier than traditional LEGO trains. Our track system is also not meant for the size of the wheels on the engine car. So, it was very, very quickly realised that this model was not going to work for motorisation.'

MAGICAL MINIFIGURES

While that news disappoints fans of the LEGO train system, not motorising the engine allows it to shine as a display model instead. That includes spaces for the 22 minifigures to be placed so that the build really feels alive – although getting them all in the train car would have been a squeeze, leading to the addition of Platform 9^{3/4}.

'To begin with there was no station in the concept,' says Marcos. '[Later] we decided to have some characters populating the outside of the model and they would naturally go on the station. I explored how could we give presence to the station without taking too much away from the train, to find a balance.'

The risk was that with more platform, there would be fewer pieces for the train itself, or that the piece count would just get even larger and so would the price. Rather than run the platform the whole length of the train, Marcos built just a section, providing the display piece needed without things getting out of hand. 'I hope it invites people out

there to build their own versions of the platform, continuing the format and expanding upon it. It should be easy to replicate and modular enough that people can make bigger versions if they want to.'

One of minifigure highlights in the set are the familiar characters with older faces, finally bringing to life the concluding moment of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2, which is one of the most underrepresented Harry Potter films when it comes to LEGO sets. 'We thought this is our opportunity to bring in some characters from this epilogue moment,' Marcos explains. 'There was an iteration where we did have a bigger selection of characters from that last moment, but it was felt it would have been unbalanced because more casual fans would not necessarily recognise these generic minifigures in casual clothing.'

Two extra students from the less famous Hogwarts houses are part of the balance that the designers seek to achieve in the minifigure line-up. 'We're both Ravenclaw,' Marcos says of Andrew and himself. 'There are a lot of nerds and geeks on the team.' There's also a Hufflepuff student for fans who are reliable enough to finish building the mammoth set.

AS A KID, GOING ON A TRAIN WAS ALWAYS A VERY SPECIAL OCCASION



The shade of red was carefully selected.

Considering the theme first arrived more than 20 years ago, it's impressive that the designers are finding new characters to depict. Amazingly, the Train Driver has never been included before despite being rather essential to the Hogwarts Express. Not seen at any time on screen, the minifigure required some outside help.

'We knew of the existence of the train conductor and thought it would be a shame in this version of the train, where we are trying to be so accurate, to have the engine just by itself without anyone conducting it. So, we had some conversations with Warner Bros. and managed to get some reference from them. I believe the stills were of outfits they use in the theme parks that they consider canonical enough for us to follow,' says Marcos.

TO QUOTE A WIZARD

LEGO Harry Potter is a theme rich in source material, and while the minifigures may depict some lesser-known characters, the model features famous quotes on printed tiles. Or are they so famous?

'For hardcore fans they may be obvious, memorised in the back of their minds. But again, those who are more casual fans... not everyone knows word-for-word what is said. So, having those frames reminds you of what moment that was and when you have this on display at home and you have a friend who is just a casual fan of Harry Potter, then seeing that quote might bring back that memory from the movies. The person can have a stronger connection with what they're seeing,' says Marcos.

'These individual scenes are almost dioramas that connect together. And it makes perfect sense when you see it in this way that these

moments in time have these quotes that tie them together,' adds Andrew.

76405 Hogwarts Express – Collector's Edition is tying up part of Marcos's LEGO journey, with the model marking his final entry into the theme before he moves onto future projects. It's a very special swan song for the designer as he has grown up on the Wizarding World. 'I still remember being a teenager and getting my first LEGO Harry Potter sets and playing with them. I could not have imagined that I would one day have been part of a team creating the new iteration of those toys.'

When pressed to pick out something within the model that stands out for the design wizard, he picks out an item from the Platform 9^{3/4}: 'It was

the archways for the station. I like them particularly because I remember some of my colleagues passing and not realising that the section is built upside down. The moment you have something with a narrow footprint that then goes wider, it's naturally a challenge in LEGO form. It was just one of those simple ideas that when I had it, I was so proud of it.'

Professor Dumbledore told Harry Potter that trains have the ability to take people onwards and this set certainly demonstrates the way that the theme can offer a breadth of models for adults, constantly shifting the subject matter and scale to keep things fresh. Given just how recognisable Hogwarts Express is and that key moment of discovery it offers the audience, Potterheads are likely to be drawn to this set no matter how deeply embedded in the fandom they are.

'It's an ultimate experience for the consumer,' Andrew reflects. It may be a static model, yet it will take fans on a journey through the spellbound saga when they build the scarlet steam engine for themselves. ■

■ ■ **OUR INTENTION WAS TO
MAKE THE MOST DETAILED
AND ACCURATE VERSION
WE COULD ■ ■**





The scenes are from different films.



The Train Driver makes his LEGO debut.

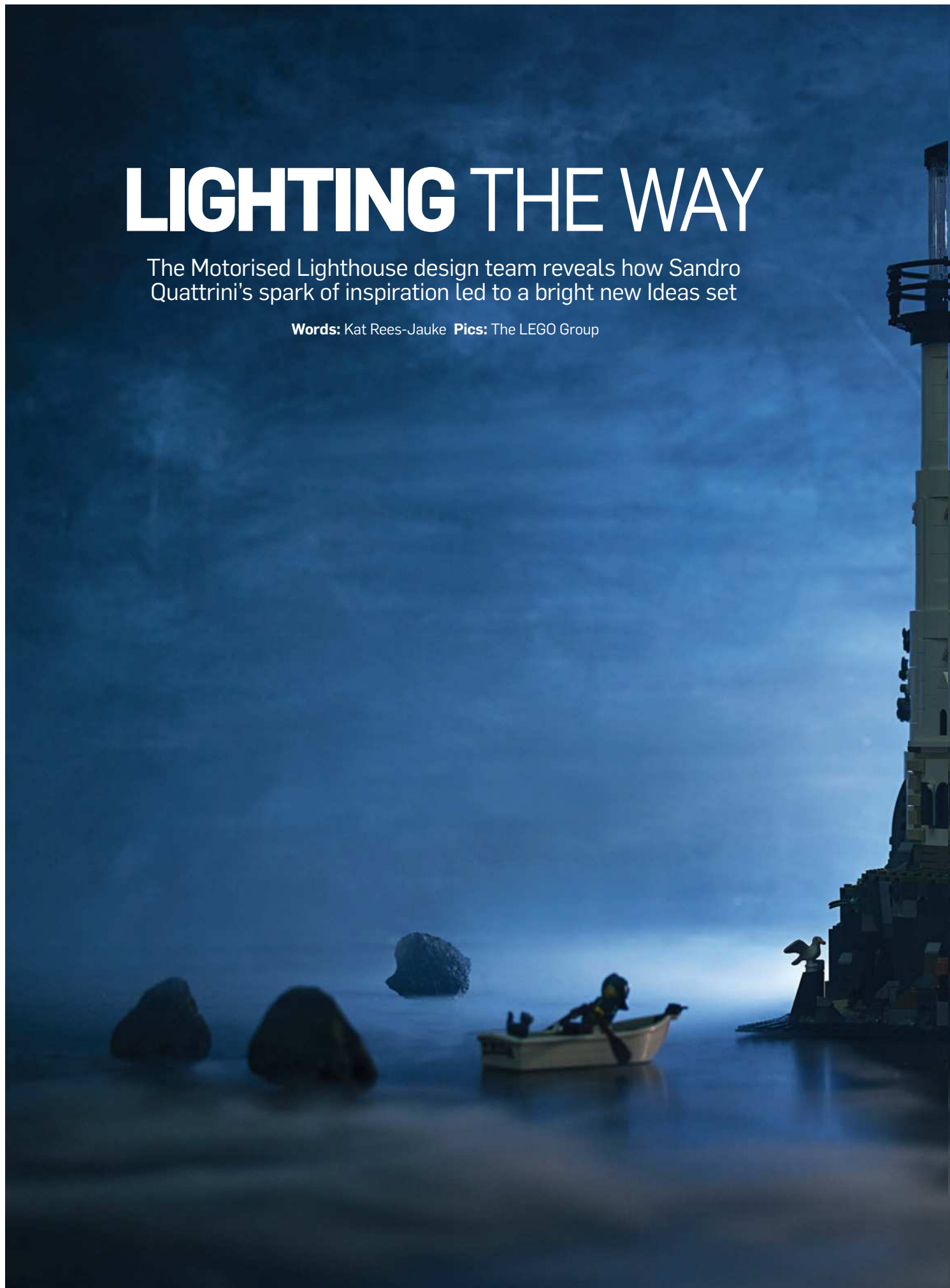


Many, many minifigures.

LIGHTING THE WAY

The Motorised Lighthouse design team reveals how Sandro Quattrini's spark of inspiration led to a bright new Ideas set

Words: Kat Rees-Jauke **Pics:** The LEGO Group





21335 Motorised Lighthouse captures the beauty of the coast.

The lighthouse sits on a rocky outcrop.

The rowboat is in white for the first time.

A cosy spot for the lighthouse keeper.



STANDING SOLITARY ON rocky coastlines around the world, lighthouses guide ships to safe harbour with their familiar light. The first lighthouse dates back to the time of the pharaohs in Ancient Egypt, as the Pharos of Alexandria towered over 400 feet and used a huge fire at its peak. While sailors often used fires and even the glow of volcanoes to navigate rocky shores, as modern lighthouses were purposefully built from the 18th century onwards, technological advancements led to the bulbs and lenses now used today.

LEGO Ideas is no stranger to the raw beauty of the sea, nor tall models, and Sandro Quattrini's motorised lighthouse sailed to 10,000 votes with ease. It wasn't past models that inspired Sandro though, but rather a very persistent family member. 'The main source of inspiration was just my mother bugging me to build a lighthouse for years. She absolutely loves them,' laughs Sandro, the official set standing proudly behind him next to his original submission. While you can notice a few differences between them, they are remarkably similar – a testament to Sandro's design skills.

Lighthouses in LEGO bricks aren't particularly unusual and there have been offerings in LEGO City, Creator and even the short-lived Scooby Doo theme. To bring something special to his version, Sandro decided to use his personal experience with lighthouses to add an extra level of authenticity to his build. 'It has been on my mind ever since I took a road trip when I was 10 years old around the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec. It's chockfull of lighthouses of all shapes and sizes,' he explains.

A scenic part of the Atlantic side of the Canadian coastline, Gaspé is home to 14 lighthouses built in a range of styles, including the striking bright red La Martre Lighthouse. However, most of these lighthouses are relatively small, and if there's one thing that Sandro really wanted to capture it's the idea of a lonely building rising straight out of the sea. 'I love to build tall things – the thing that's most imposing when you see it in a

room. Just the sheer size of the lighthouse, with a small rock island that can barely hold the tower, was the most important aspect.'

Sandro is quick to point out that 21335 isn't specifically based on any one lighthouse from the peninsula, instead it's a bit of an amalgamation. 'I think one of the lighthouses that's stuck with me the most from the Gaspé Peninsula is the Pointe-au-Père in Rimouski. It's one of the first towns we visited [on vacation] and I think also the very first lighthouse that we saw. And the tallest one.' That lighthouse certainly provided the inspiration for the red and white colour scheme, but some research led Sandro to take elements from the Bell Rock Lighthouse in Scotland for the shape, as well as looking at images of lighthouses at sea for figuring out the little island.

While his original submission was a bright red and white, 21335 has been toned down a bit, using dark reds and olive greens instead. When the model was brought to the Ideas table, moody was the goal. 'The colour scheme for me was super strong and we wanted to stay truthful to that. The roof of the cabin became a dark red naturally because we decided to remove some of the colours from the tower to make it even more imposing,' says Senior Model

Designer Luka Kapeter, who became the lighthouse keeper in charge of turning the concept into an official set. 'The only thing that we changed was the colour of the water because we didn't want to tile the whole baseplate. But we still wanted that dark water colour, so that's why we changed the baseplate to dark blue to get that moodiness.'

Another reason for this essential moody vibe is because 21335 is intended to evoke the past. It required some historical research, leading to the lighthouse keeper minifigure wearing a navy uniform to match his real life historical Danish counterparts. This highlights the biggest change made to Sandro's submission – the scale. 'Early on we discussed it with Sandro because we wanted to make sure everyone was happy,' explains Sam Johnson, Ideas design manager during the set's development.

'We knew this would be a great addition to the landscapes that fans

THE SHEER SIZE OF THE LIGHTHOUSE WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT



It's a 2,065 piece model.

are creating at home. We knew adding this to your collection in minifigure scale would be a great follow up to past LEGO Ideas sets, such as the Old Fishing Village, to continue this aesthetic. It also allowed us to include a couple of new exclusive minifigures, which was very exciting.'

Upscaling the model for minifigures also allowed the classic LEGO boat element to be included in white for the first time – a very deliberate colour choice. 'We wanted to stay historically accurate. If you look at 19th century boats, usually they are painted white,' explains Luka.

Of course, a lighthouse cannot be a lighthouse without its eponymous light. However, a typical light brick wasn't going to do the trick, requiring a constant source of pressure to activate, not to mention it wouldn't look like a true lighthouse beam piercing through the dark. The design team needed a solution in a very short period of time, as Ideas sets have a compressed development cycle. 'In the first few prototypes we were actually using a [LEGO] magnifying glass as a lens and we really felt it wasn't doing it justice,' says Luka. Lighthouses have used Fresnel lenses since their invention in the 1820s and a LEGO equivalent was needed for the set.

'Lots and lots of prototypes were made to get precisely the right light shaft,' says Senior Play Designer (Elements) Peter de Fine Licht. He wasn't originally picked out for the project, but came aboard to create the Fresnel lens piece to literally set the model alight. As luck would have it, he had already worked on a similar element for BOOST and could utilise that know-how for 21335.

'It really accents the concentric rings, which is the iconic look for the lighthouse,' he says about the new piece. 'Usually we do a lot of testing, and we did, but we had to cram it into one year.' The LEGO LED light element has never been used in such a way before and had to be rigorously safety tested. That includes having the motor and light functional for 48 hours straight to ensure there would be no strain on the part or heat hazard. 'It's not really normal that we do a functional element in such a

short development time, so this really pushed everyone.'

It is a part of 21335 that everyone is exceptionally proud of. 'I was over the moon. Having a new functional element being made for the model is like the cherry on the top. A big, big, big cherry,' Sandro enthuses.

After perfecting the light it was onto the motor, something that concerned Sandro a lot. 'In the very first meeting [with the Ideas team] I had this whole list of bullet points. One of the first things I brought up was the sound the motor was going to make, because having the original submission running was like having a steam engine. It chugs away and makes a lot of noise. The motor is just vibrating all over the place.'

In the final model, the motor is hidden within the rocky island, just like

Sandro's submission, but it utilises a clever new technique to minimise any vibrations that could affect the lighthouse. 'We tried a few different executions of how to reduce the vibrations, and then we finally came up with this one. The motor floats on rubber Technic

1x2 beams,' explains Luka. It's a simple yet effective solution used in many engineering projects, not just LEGO builds, and the rubber absorbs any vibrations to make the motor run more smoothly.

There is no doubt that 21335 Motorised Lighthouse is an impressive display piece, whether simply standing on a shelf or its motor turning the light around a room. For Sandro and the design team though it's not just the size and scale that matters, but also the little personal details snuck into the model. 'It was a lot of fun coming up with little personal Easter eggs. There's the family portrait that the graphic designer came up with. It's a very heartfelt detail to include. I sent the design team some photos from the family trip,' says Sandro. For Luka, who's a massive fan of the classic Pirates theme, a treasure chest hidden in a cave on the island provides an ode to those swashbuckling adventures.

Sam summarises the team's experience bringing the model together: 'We wanted to give fans an authentic lighthouse experience. For us it's an opportunity to do something brand new within a known realm.' ■

WE CHANGED THE BASEPLATE TO DARK BLUE TO GET THAT MOODINESS

Sandro Quattrini was influenced by real lighthouses.



The official set is in minifigure scale.

The height makes it an impressive display piece.

The minifigure is inspired by history.



INSIDE THE OFFICE

It's happening! Head inside the LEGO office to learn how the beloved comedy was adapted for the LEGO Ideas theme

Words: Kat Rees-Jauke **Pics:** The LEGO Group



HOW DO YOU condense nine seasons of sitcom episodes into one LEGO model? As a massive fan of *The Office*, Jai Jai Lewis challenged himself with creating a model that would do justice to the long-running show. Once he had come up with a LEGO build depicting the bland workplace in Scranton that audiences are still falling in love with, he submitted it to LEGO Ideas.

Thanks to the broad audience that the US adaptation of the UK sitcom has built over the years, Jai Jai's build reached 10,000 votes three times. It was third time lucky, with the LEGO review panel rejecting it on the first two occasions.

With the model receiving the corporate blessing that Michael Scott was always chasing, it was time for the next phase. As massive fans of *The Office*, husband and wife and LEGO Model Designers Chris and Laura Perron were tasked with delivering a model that would live up to fan expectations, alongside Senior Graphic Designer Diego Sancho whose vital role was to capture the essence of each character.

REFERENCES GALORE

Jai Jai Lewis: The first ever reference I built was Andy's hole in the wall. That Technic brick is first bit that was in the first design. I love the photocopier and Pam's painting is probably my favourite thing in there.

Laura Perron: I'm going to give a special shout-out to the mung bean that Creed is holding. The olive-green stud with light yellow on top of it. I think that's a small detail that makes me laugh every time I think about it.

Chris Perron: I love Bandit, the little kitten, fitting inside the cupboard. I'm just so happy that the new kitten element is small enough to fit inside a cupboard like that, that's wonderful. And I also really like the easel in the conference room with the 'don't/do not bother Luke'. I love that scene and I love that line.

Diego Sancho: I think mine was the 'hiya buddy' post-it note. I think we were laughing a lot when we thought about it and it's really cute.



OFFICE EMPLOYEES

Diego: I think Stanley is one of my favourites for sure. In the show he always has the same face and I was cracking myself up just by thinking I could do both head expressions almost exactly the same. That was pretty fun to do.

I also think Dwight was an interesting one, just trying to manage his facial expression on a minifigure and his boring outfit.

There's a bit of a challenge in all of them because you want to make a good representation for fans. Thankfully we're a great team and we can inspire each other on what element to use or what reference to use. For some of them it was harder because of the elements, like for the characters that don't have much hair, so you can't use a hair element that we would typically use.



THIRD TIME LUCKY

Jai Jai: The biggest thing I learned is that perseverance pays off. Also that it's very easy when you're proposing a LEGO set to go all out and throw everything in there and build the biggest set possible. But I learnt through the process that you have to be realistic on what you can propose. You have to thread the needle of wanting to get all the references in there, but also not wanting to recreate an entire building because that's not a reasonable size.

DISPLAYING DESKS

Laura: One guiding point for us pretty early on in the process was a great quote that Pam has at the end of the series. She says, 'there's a lot of beauty in ordinary things. Isn't that kind of the point?'

We used that as a starting point. We know that the office itself is intended to be just a working space and the magic happens with the characters and their interactions. So we knew that a lot of the appeal is going to come from the character design and we just focused on getting the accuracy of the layout of the office, making sure that the builds were really interesting. Even though it may be a bookshelf or something, let's make it an interesting bookshelf.

Chris: We tried to add colour wherever we could. So, the desks are a sand blue colour and they have a different wood top. We asked, what colour can we use for the wooden tabletop that's different from another table? Just to add a little bit more visual interest. We tried to cram some colours in there, using a lot of the different nougat shades to try and replicate the colours of paper and the manila folders, just to spice it up.



KEEPING IT INTERESTING

Laura: Details play a huge part in the experience as. Adding many references into the stickers helps make the experience more interesting because you're thinking about all of the episodes they're a part of. We can also play with the experience by how we lay out the bag splits, like which characters we put in at what stage of the build, as a way to keep it interesting.

Chris: We tried to make it so you're not just building one thing for a really long time. You build stuff and then you have a little fun moment. Build, and then another fun thing happens.

A PERFECT FIT

Jai Jai: From my perspective both LEGO and The Office hit the heart of the same experience, which is comfort. So, I look at The Office like a blanket. You can wrap it around yourself and watch your favourite episodes and find joy in everyday moments in an ordinary setting. You can do the same with LEGO. You can take a LEGO set and build a beautiful experience using pieces. I think both offer a lot of comfort.

Laura: There's a cast of characters in a not-so-inspiring environment and they're all trying to make the best of it, whether that's through pulling pranks or telling jokes. That translates really well into a building system like LEGO. You can bring that really fun spirit to it.

Diego: It's like Jai Jai was saying, it's about building a memory of the show. You can have it there, see the model and remember the show. You can become happy because the show is so silly, so funny and that funniness is a good connection between The Office and LEGO.



FAVOURITE EPISODE

Jai Jai: Easy! "Stress Relief". It's an extra-long episode, so it's an extra-long treat. A couple of the most iconic moments are included in the set, like lighting the fire and Stanley's heart attack. It is easily my favourite episode and I know it's a fan favourite too.

Diego: For me it's "Dinner Party". It's just so cringey and so uncomfortable to watch, but it's so funny. It doesn't happen in the office, so unfortunately we couldn't add any references to it.

Laura: "Dinner Party" is also my favourite episode. I totally agree with Diego. I couldn't even watch it the first time because I could not handle the amount of cringe. It's like a fine wine, it gets better and better every time I watch it.

Chris: I'll change it up a little bit. The one I really enjoy is "Casino Night". You get a really nice taste of all the characters in that one. It's so fun. Kevin's talking about how he loves gambling, and then Phyllis ends up winning, and Creed is just stealing poker chips off in the background. [Laughs]





TIME FOR A **BRICK** ABOUT

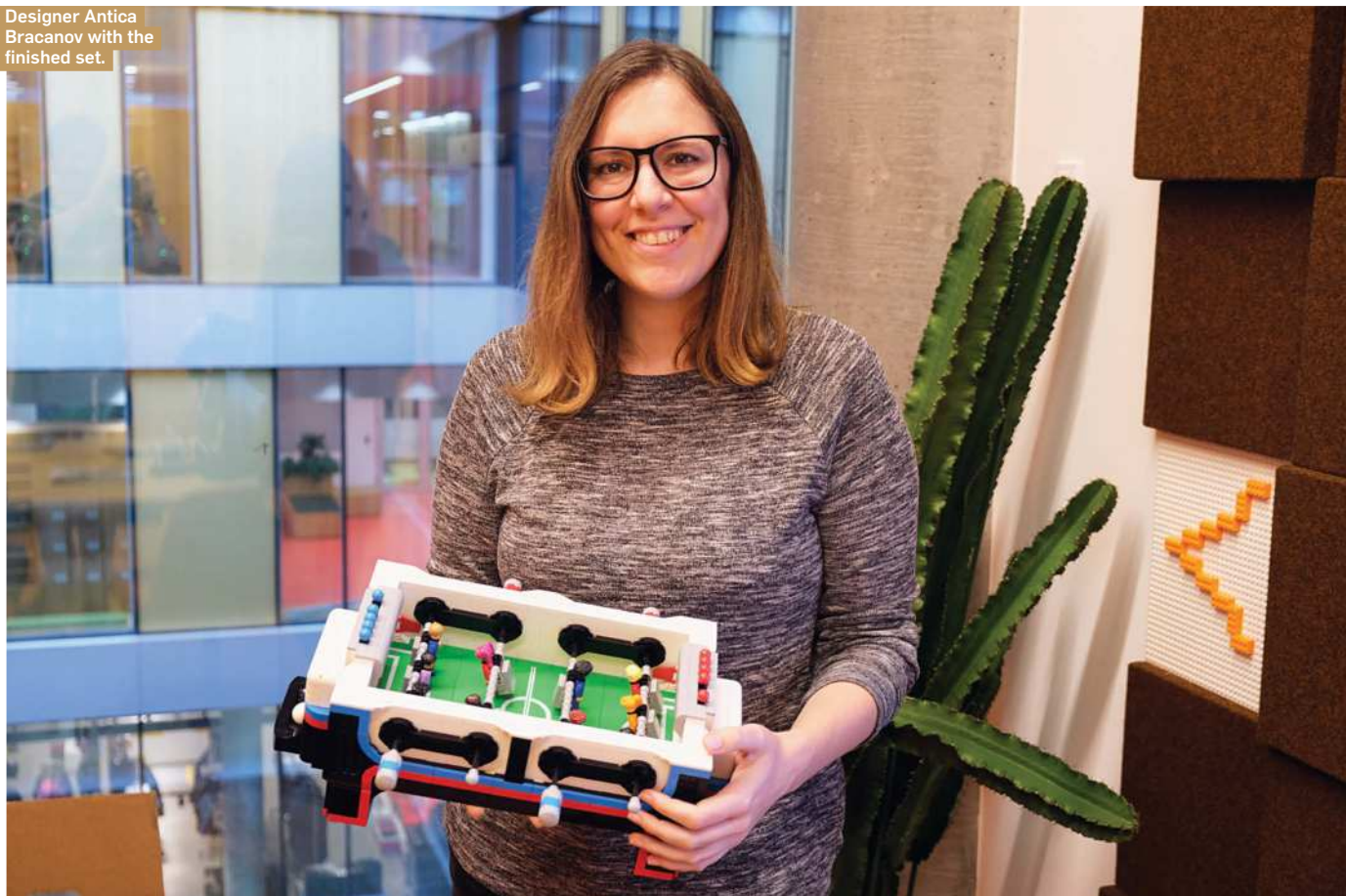
The Ideas team tells the story of how making a LEGO Table Football proved to be their biggest challenge yet

Words: Graham Hancock **Pics:** The LEGO Group, Graham Hancock



It's time
to get
competitive.

Designer Antica Bracanov with the finished set.



Donát Fehérvári's original concept.



Thierry Henry and Marcus Rashford get hands on.

Stare down your opponents.



NO-ONE WOULD CLAIM that LEGO designers have an easy job. But during the development of LEGO Ideas 21337 Football Table, there was even more head-scratching than usual and a few days that saw them leaving the office wondering if the project would ever see the light of day.

It must make it all the sweeter that this unique model is now available, bringing together family, friends, roommates, colleagues... any group of people with a bit of competitive spirit.

Back in 2020, the LEGO Group was launching the company's adult strategy. A few key adult 'passion points' were identified that had not yet been tapped into; music lovers and sports fans were not being suitably satiated by the sets on offer. To help remedy this, the Ideas platform put out briefs for fans to build to – 'Music to our ears!' led to the release of 21329 Fender Stratocaster, then 'We love sports' saw Donát Fehérvári's table football (also known as foosball, as popularised in the USA) design beat out almost 900 other builds to win a popular vote.

This helped the LEGO Group to figure out what to release – after all, 'sports' is a broad category. 'It was tough going through them all,' Senior Marketing Manager Monica Pedersen tells Blocks. 'Lots of Olympics builds, there were some great ideas there. But there were five or six submissions on a type of foosball table, then the fan vote also landed on the foosball table as being the most popular one.'

To get things underway, Design Manager Sam Johnson built the fan design. Donát constructed his version digitally, so this was the first time that the concept had been tackled with physical bricks – and it threw up an issue.

'We found out that when you play foosball, it's not the most relaxed game in the world,' Sam understates. 'We did a lot of testing, we invited hundreds of people from our office to come and play the game. They had tournaments; they wrecked the things we built. They all got totally destroyed.'

KICK OFF

Naturally, the original concept was a typical eleven-a-side table football game. That size was the biggest issue that the model had, as getting it to be stable enough to withstand vigorous gameplay simply wasn't working.

It was clear that – as with every Ideas set – the professionals would have to refine the fan design. When Sam discussed the model with Designer Antica Bracanov, he didn't realise he had found the most qualified

person in the building for the project. 'The funny thing is I built a foosball table a long time ago, when I was still a fan,' she explains. 'When I talked to Sam about this, he was showing me some fan-built table footballs online. He was showing me this picture saying, "look at this one, it's really cool." I was like, "that's mine actually."'

That Antica had built her own table football model before working for the LEGO Group meant that she knew about the pitfalls. 'When I built that model, people were playing with it a lot – and it was completely trashed. I brought it home in pieces. I thought, "this has to be a set, it will be really interesting to see what we can do to actually make this a really solid model that people can play with."'

Many iterations of the eleven-a-side table came about. The model had already been announced on a LEGO livestream, so the pressure was on to deliver a table football experience. Early attempts used the LEGO cross axle piece, but the element was bending and even snapping, it seemed an unsuitable part for spinning the players around with. There was an attempt to connect Technic beams and reinforce them, but they were hard to build and the minifigure football players would not hang in a suitable way.

'We combined two axles, they were connected by another axle in the middle. Building that eight times and making sure that they're perfectly aligned was not something that we wanted people to have to do,' Antica says.

These sticks were not the only challenge. The ball wasn't rolling around the pitch in a way that worked, the players were either sitting too low or too high, the ball was getting stuck in the corners. At some point along the way, every designer in the adult area of the team was called in to consult on the model.

Each time the design team solved one problem, it would create another elsewhere. They tried out five or six new specialised elements, but there was no one new piece that would have solved the problems they were facing. 'We could have probably found the solution with new elements... but then we would launch in 2025,' Monica quips.

As if the specific gameplay problems were not enough, the unwieldy size of the table meant that it had way too much flex in it and would have required thousands more pieces to keep it stable enough for a game, pushing the price higher as a result. While photography was not allowed, Sam and Antica brought the flimsy and damaged models with them to illustrate just how unstable they were.

WE FOUND OUT THAT WHEN YOU PLAY FOOSBALL, IT'S NOT THE MOST RELAXED GAME IN THE WORLD



The build promises variety.

HALF TIME TEAM TALK

There came a moment in the process when it seemed like there would never be an official LEGO version of table football. 'We had a little bit of an awkward meeting. We're fortunate enough to have the best designers in the world on the team,' Monica says. 'There was a menu of different offerings that we could then pick from and one of those was a miniature version of the foosball table that would still allow you to play.'

'In the end, we identified that no matter what we do we always have the issue with the rods,' Antica adds. 'We realised that this was just not feasible. Then the question was what would be feasible? What can we use as the axle? We used the longest LEGO element that we have.'

Everything was then scaled to that element. 'You can still fit 10 figures on the pitch and the ball can still move around. There are no dead zones where the ball gets stuck. People will still have fun, the same way they were having fun with a bigger version.'

With the smaller model, the team managed to get a solid unit. The 2,339 pieces are packed into the build so that it is robust enough to withstand two adults spinning those bars and getting immersed in the thrill of the match. There is a slider for scoring just like on a traditional table football and a place for keeping accessories like the spare ball.

One of the gains that was made when shrinking the model down was that the build process would be quicker, so getting to the actual gameplay would not require quite as much patience. That had been a concern with the larger version, that it would take a lot of time to construct and involve a lot of repetition.

'This retains the fun and is maybe even more intense because you're in close quarters,' says Sam. 'You can actually fit it on your desk and hopefully you don't feel like you have to put it away.'

CHOOSING THE PLAYERS

When Antica started working on the smaller version, the number of players on the pitch went down from 22 to 10, turning the game into five-a-side football. The LEGO professionals decided to still include two full football teams though, so there's also a small bench build with space for 12 more minifigure soccer stars and a trophy for whichever colour ends up victorious.

LEGO devotees will immediately notice that – despite this not being a licensed set – the minifigures are not in traditional yellow, but instead there are different skin tones. 'We actually have 44 heads, 43 wigs, 22 torsos and 22 legs, so you have the option to do whatever you want,' says Sam. 'We want to offer everyone the opportunity to see themselves in one of these characters so you can mix and match the characters

however you want.'

It's not quite that simple though – each torso has a specific colour for the hands, so if you want the minifigure's head to match the skin tone on their hands, you'll have quite a big limitation when picking out heads for your team. As well as a mix of skin tones, other traits have been included to represent a broad range of people; there's a head with a hearing aid and a head with the skin condition vitiligo.

The involvement of the LEGO brand team led to the surprising choice for the set's minifigures. 'This particular product was decided on by the LEGO Ideas team at a point where our brand team came up with an idea to do a foosball table,' Monica explains. 'Instead of doing two different foosball tables, we decided to just join up.'

'They have an agenda to make sure that we meet different focus points in the LEGO Group. So one would be sustainability, one would be diversity and inclusion and so on. That's part of the brand team's agenda, to push for that in our

products and in campaigns around the LEGO Group. They were looking to do something special with the new skin tones that we have available and since we were doing a product together, it was a dialogue we had with them.'

It's all going to be part of a marketing campaign that will declare 'football is for everyone', something that UK pundits and commentators spent a lot of the past year talking about as England's team were victorious in the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 tournament.

'It's for the love and joy of playing football together and for everyone to be able to see themselves here. Whether it's a boy or it's a girl or it's a parent or it's an AFOL,' says Monica. 'There is nothing that's straightforward when it comes to the yellow minifigure or no yellow minifigure. This is being accompanied by a bigger brand campaign from the LEGO Group, using this product to bring that message forward.'

So even the minifigure selection for this set was complex. It was certainly a journey for the team involved, but now, after all of the challenges, all of the frustrating days and all of the tournaments with their colleagues, they have the finalised set ready for the world to enjoy.

'This set is probably the most tested LEGO set of all time,' Sam laughs. 'We have been through some real highs and some very deep lows.'

The launch of 21337 Football Table has allowed the team to finish on the highest of highs; professional footballers Thierry Henry and Marcus Rashford have been part of the model's marketing campaign, with a fun video seeing the two playing the LEGO game against each other with an enthusiastic crowd spectating. It's this spirit of fun competition that the design team has sought to pack into the model, just at a smaller size than they originally envisioned. ■

■ ■ IT WILL BE REALLY INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TO ACTUALLY MAKE THIS A REALLY SOLID MODEL ■ ■



An additional build displays the extra players.



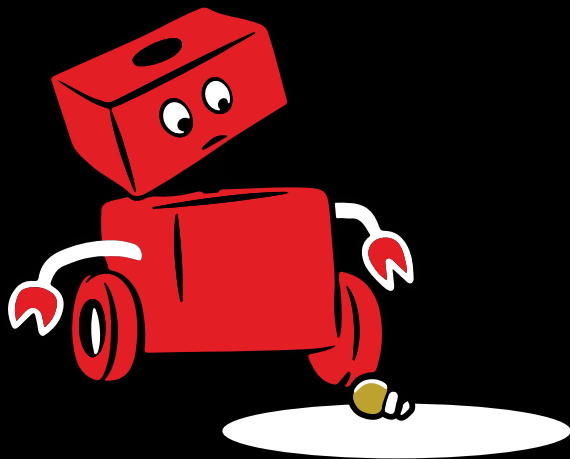
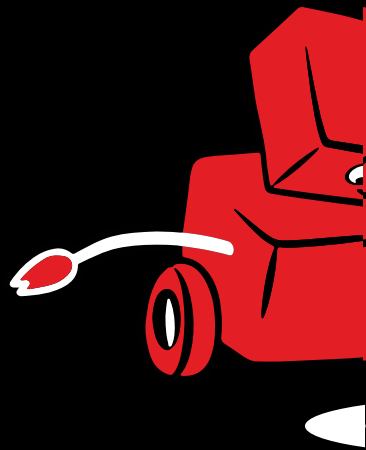
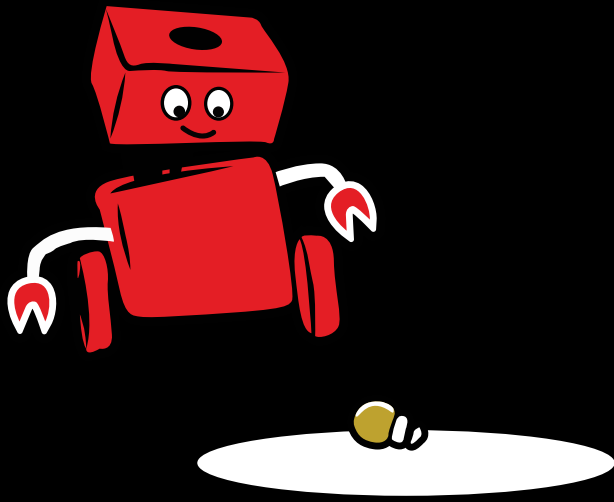
Who will win?

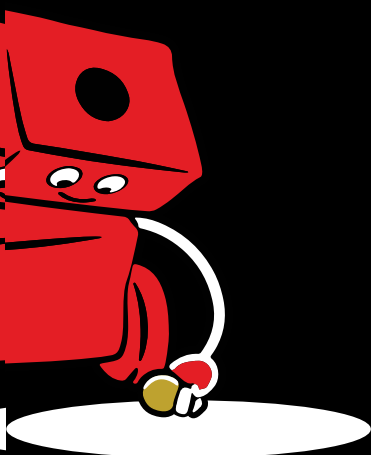
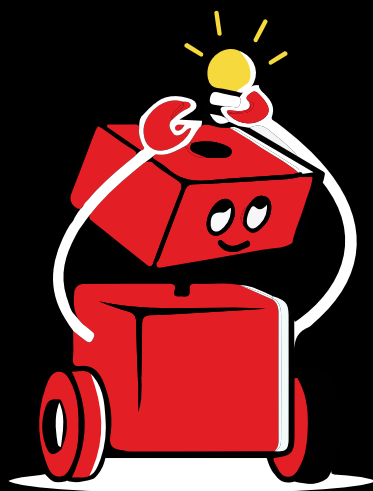


The team colours are blue and red.

A diverse group of minifigures.







Imagine a World without light?
Light up your LEGO World today
<https://gameofbricks.eu/>



Price: £429.99, \$499.99, €499.99 / **Minifigures:** 20 / **Pieces:** 5,129

76405 HOGWARTS EXPRESS COLLECTORS' EDITION

There's magic to be found in the details of this new LEGO Harry Potter display model that comes with a classroom's worth of minifigures

Words & Pics: Daniel Konstanski



76405 HOGWARTS EXPRESS Collectors' Edition is not a working train model and that is vital to know if you're considering this set. This is the definitive version of the Potterverse's iconic train and it is unlikely that the LEGO Group will ever devote this many bricks to the subject matter ever again. The result is an absolutely breathtaking model that will enchant Potterheads and Muggles alike on display; just be aware, that sit on display is all it will do.

With few prominent vehicles in the Harry Potter stories, the Hogwarts Express as a LEGO model goes all the way back to when 4708 Hogwarts Express was released amongst the inaugural wave of products. Since then, the iconic red and gold train has been rendered in the brick four additional times, excluding various small polybags and promotional models. However, with a piece count six times the size of the second largest version (75955), 76405 stands apart as the largest, most accurate and all around most awesome rendition of the Hogwarts Express ever created.

This Collectors' Edition is most obviously distinct thanks to its size. When fully assembled it stretches an incredible 118 cm,

which puts its just shy of 10294 Titanic's astonishing length. The iconic barrel engine, a coal car and one of the passenger cars have been cast in what seems to be almost exactly minifigure scale. Those who have built any other LEGO train models will immediately appreciate what this increased size facilitates in terms of interior details.

The passenger car is the most striking. At

■ ■ THAT THERE IS ENOUGH ROOM FOR EVERYTHING IS ASTOUNDING ■ ■

each end a trio of doors open into vestibules just like in actual trains. These then connect to a general seating area on one side and a hallway on the other, which runs alongside two enclosed cabins that can be accessed via sliding doors just like in the movies. Each of these doors is a gorgeous, printed element. Within each cabin, as well as the general seating area, three scenes from various films are depicted and can be lit by individual light

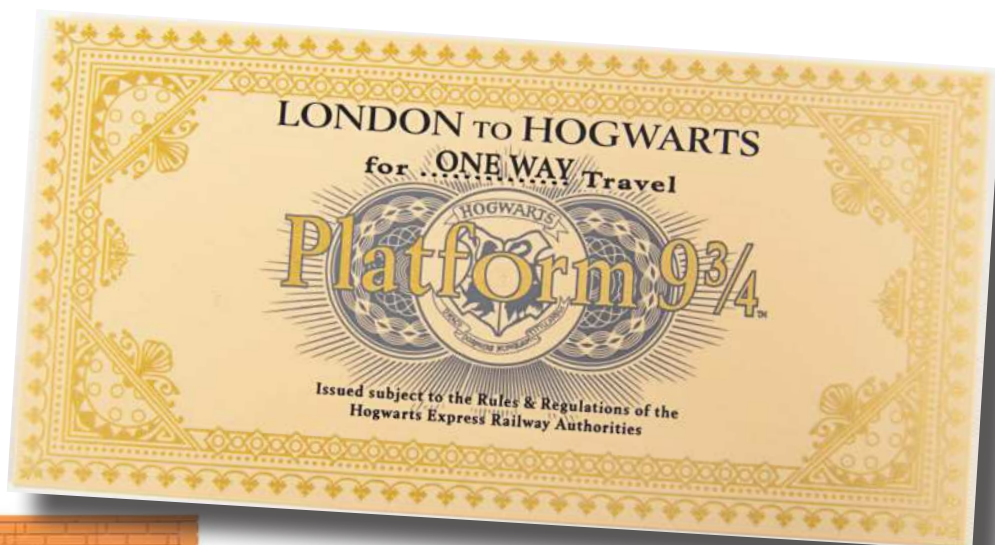
bricks nestled in the ceiling.

Seating everyone gets a little tight, and arms must be positioned alternately up and down on adjacent characters, but the fact that there is enough room for everything is astounding. Each cabin is highly detailed with panel seating, shelves for luggage above and sconces in the walls. The general seating area stretches the full width of the carriage and includes a variety of chairs crafted to look like those from the various films. It too is lit from above.

The walls of the passenger car are a masterclass in sideways building and SNOT techniques. Regular 1x4x6 windows are flipped on their sides and joined to slopes to keep the tight profiles necessitated by the competing requirements of accuracy and space. Lots of details are included, most notably the gold accents that made the original train so distinctive.

From the passenger carriage at the back, the next portion of the train is the coal car. In past models these have been quite small, but here it is over half the length of the passenger car. Nothing opens or really does anything, its interior is completely hollow and covered with the barest minimum of parts, yet it contains

A full-size ticket complements the display.



It's best to eat it before it gets away.



Let's hope there are no Dementors around.



There's space for Luna's memorable appearance.



The Trolley Witch offers treats.



The train can be displayed without the platform.



one of the most impressive techniques in the whole model. Here, the gold accenting protrudes slightly from the side and has been formed into a perfect rectangle using sideways building.

Finally, there is the Hogwarts Express's most distinctive section thanks to its prominence in exterior shots of the train – the barrel engine. An ingenious collection of techniques have been used to gradually reduce the barrel shape with as few noticeable seams as possible. Like with the other two cars behind it, the size of the engine is impressive. Some details of the boiler are included in the cab, but otherwise the interior is fairly plain. Likewise, small exterior details like lights and rails are kept to a minimum, especially when compared to Creator Expert trains from the past decade.

Until now, train sets outside of City have been almost the exclusive domain of the

LEGO Group's now retired Creator Expert theme. Such products have consisted of highly detailed train models that, despite those extra details, were still designed to run on the standard LEGO train track. They are models

THIS TRAIN CANNOT RUN ON REGULAR TRACK ELEMENTS

for collectors while still being functioning trains. At first glance, 76405 Hogwarts Express Collectors' Edition looks like it is following the same formula as 10277 Crocodile Locomotive from 2020, placing a highly detailed train model on a section of track designed for display.

The difference between the two is that to get

enough interior room for all the little scenes, designers of 76405 added an extra stud of width to the train's wheelbase. For something to run on standard LEGO train tracks it needs a four-stud wide wheelbase, which means that this Harry Potter train cannot run on regular track elements. Having made such functionality impossible, designers didn't put any sort of functionality into the model's wheels other than a mechanism for turning some of them with a handle on the boiler.

Each bag of train wheels includes non-flanged wheels and more accurate flanged variants – since this engine will never go around a corner, the more accurate flanged variants are used exclusively. Due to this lack of functionality, 76405 Hogwarts Express Collectors' Edition should be thought of in the same category as 76391 Hogwarts Icons rather than a typical 18+ train.

This is the largest LEGO coal car yet.



The passenger car is wide enough for an access hall.



Multiple generations of characters are included.



This is an impressive model for display that just happens to depict a train. By no means is that a problem, but it is vital that fans expecting a typical detailed train that can be motorised should go in fully aware that it isn't that.

Another way that this model deviates from expectations is when it comes to strength, which has been sacrificed for accuracy. Both the engine and passenger cars are quite fragile and break easily when the set is being moved. 76405 is intended to be built and then placed somewhere. This is surprising, as typically the fact that models will be moved has been taken into account during the design process.

A brick-built length of track is included for the train to be placed on and – through the use of some well-hidden connection points – attached to. These connections prevent the train from rolling if the model happens to be

VERDICT

This minifigure scale model is the definitive Hogwarts Express for display, lacking the motion that long-term train enthusiasts will be looking for.

81/100

set on a slightly sloped surface. The track utilises individual rails set atop jumper plates to evenly spread the extra stud of width across both sides. Finishing off the display is the section of Platform 9³/₄. Here again there are some fantastic techniques used to get the arch as well as ornate detailing on the pillars and metal rails.

Topping off the set's impressive array of features is its astonishing minifigure count. An incredible 20 characters are included so that every scene can be populated simultaneously

without any need to swap people around. Corresponding minifigures are included for each of the interior scenes features. There are adult versions of Harry and Ginny along with their children so that the epilogue of Deathly Hallows can be recreated on the platform section.

The LEGO Group has been doing a fantastic job catering to adults who grew up loving Harry Potter and now have the disposable income to really indulge in some very special display models. 76405 Hogwarts Express Collector's Edition joins what is becoming an impressive series of display sets inspired by the franchise. Anyone who enjoyed 76406 Hungarian Horntail Dragon, 76391 Hogwarts Icons - Collectors' Edition or 76394 Fawkes, Dumbledore's Phoenix will adore this model. Those looking for a detailed train that moves though will need to wait for the next one to arrive. ■

Space for the first-ever Hogwarts Train Driver.



This can be easily added or removed.

76405's train track is not standard LEGO gauge.



THIS IS AN IMPRESSIVE MODEL FOR DISPLAY



There is a little functionality in the model.

ESSENTIALS

YOU MAY ALSO WANT...



76391 Hogwarts Icons - Collectors' Edition offers another beautiful Harry Potter display model.

TECHNIQUE SPOTLIGHT



76405 offers a masterclass in SNOT building, ensuring that it looks polished by building in every different direction.

BRICK SPOTLIGHT



Hopefully this life-sized LEGO ticket to Hogwarts is valid at King's Cross Station.

MINIFIGURE SPOTLIGHT



Fully grown Harry Potter from the series' final scene is included as a minifigure for the first time, along with the next generation.

HOW YOU'LL SPEND YOUR TIME WITH 76405

20%

Looking up parts on BrickLink to build a few more passenger cars to make a full train

20%

Finding a spot where any visitors to your home will see it when they arrive

30%

Admiring the scenes depicted in the model and remembering your favourite moments

10%

Wishing it could run on normal LEGO train track

20%

Marvelling at all of the advanced techniques as you build

Price: £89.99, \$99.99, €99.99 / **Minifigures:** 9 / **Pieces:** 990

76403 MINISTRY OF MAGIC

Magic is might in this modular ministerial model

Words & Pics: Kat Rees-Jauke

VERDICT

76403 is a breath of fresh air in the Wizarding World theme and could only have been improved by going even bigger.

76/100

HIDDEN BENEATH THE streets of Whitehall in London and only accessible via phone box or a quick flush, the Ministry of Magic oversees everything from international Quidditch matches to the use of underage magic. With its elegant black and green halls, it's an unforgettable location from the Harry Potter films, yet 76403 marks the first time the Ministry has ever appeared in the brick.

The first part of this set is actually a call back to *The Order of the Phoenix*. The red phone box is built onto a 4x4 baseplate, it's the booth that Arthur Weasley ushers Harry into for his trial after casting a patronus outside of Hogwarts. It's a little too tall when scaled next to a minifigure, but the design is so good that the discrepancy can easily be overlooked. Red tiles and curved elements are used sideways so that the phone is as realistic as possible – it wouldn't look out of place in a tabletop town.

These SNOT techniques and smooth façades continue throughout the rest of the model, with very few studs visible anywhere. It makes sense because the Ministry of Magic exudes a sense of elegance and sophistication in the films, with plenty of glass and polished surfaces. Of course,

THE SET FOCUSES ON SIX KEY LOCATIONS, MAINLY INSPIRED BY THE DEATHLY HALLOWS

76403 can't capture all of the Ministry – it's far too big a location. Instead the set focuses on six key locations, mainly inspired by the *Deathly Hallows*. It wouldn't be difficult for fans to expand it though, either by buying a second copy of the set or getting the bricks to add on extra offices, as

everything is built in a modular way.

Each office and department is a self-contained module on two 6x6 corner plates. Dark green wall elements and masonry bricks build each one up, while the use of red LEGO candle elements stacked together for the pipework is ingenious. Considering each one is almost exactly the same, 76403 Ministry of Magic could have been very repetitive, but the different details help to break up the build. One really nice feature is the fireplace that Ministry workers enter through. It operates on a simple lever mechanism and looks especially effective with the trans-green flame pieces.

Another highlight is Umbridge's office, absolutely unmistakable in all its pink glory. Every element is either pink or magenta, and the cat plates on the wall are adorable (even if they are her feline spies). If all of that wasn't ostentatious enough, the designers have even included pink

The morning commute.



Ron wants to file for mistrial.



Arthur's office is a little messy.



Harry is ready to find a horcrux



LEGO bows onto the walls. It is in stark contrast to Arthur Weasley's office, something only briefly seen on screen, which is far homelier and stuffed with Muggle artefacts. His beloved rubber duck gets pride of place on a desk.

However, it's this office that highlights the biggest problem with this set; space. Each room is barely big enough for a minifigure to sit or stand in, making it really awkward for play. It also limits the display options somewhat because the minifigures have to be posed so statically. 76403 tries to balance providing as much of the Ministry

as possible while keeping the model at this size, yet making the offices bigger with a few hundred more pieces could have really elevated this set.

It's also quite frustrating because the nine unique minifigures included are all amazing. There have never been so many Ministry personnel in LEGO Harry Potter before. Umbridge has brilliant printing for her cat jacket, plus a brand new 1x1 tile for Salazar Slytherin's locket-turned-horcrux. Having Harry, Ron, and Hermione in their polyjuice disguises is brilliant and adds a great bit of storytelling to this set.

76403 Ministry of Magic is a beautifully designed model and it's fantastic to see some fresh material within the Wizarding World theme. A slightly bigger scale could have offered even more of the location, but for the price it includes so many details that you are unlikely to be disappointed by the value for money. If you have been collecting this theme for a while, then 76403 offers something completely fresh at a fair price. ■

Sneaking into the Ministry.



Price: £29.99, \$44.99, €34.99 / **Minifigures:** 7 / **Pieces:** 334

76404 HARRY POTTER ADVENT CALENDAR

What magic will be found behind these 24 doors as Potterheads count down to Christmas?

Words & Pics: Kat Rees-Jauke

WITH BANQUET TABLES brimming with turkey roasts, puddings topped in holly leaves and towering plates of mince pies, Christmas at Hogwarts makes Hallmark festive films look plain. It's always a grand affair for witches and wizards attending the school, as Hagrid hauls in trees for the Great Hall and enchanted snow flurries inside. This year the LEGO Wizarding World is doing something different, giving the advent calendar a board game twist – but is it at the expense of the Hogwarts Christmas fans love?

Rather than the usual festive mini builds and winter jumpers on the minifigures, 76404 recreates elements from each of the Harry Potter films. That's three builds per movie that can all be used together at the end for playing the board game included on the box. In principle, having these mini builds is great, allowing for brilliant

connectivity – but without any snowy tiles or red studs for holly berries, this could be any other LEGO Harry Potter set. While it is refreshing to have something different, it doesn't exactly get you in the Christmas spirit. There are no icicles,

AT THIS SCALE IT IS PRETTY HARD TO RECOGNISE WHAT SOME OF THE LOCATIONS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE

baubles or even a little LEGO Christmas tree.

The mini builds are also very static. As they are going to be the pieces for the board game, each one is built on a 2x4 baseplate, so everything is the same on display. There's no integrating the

mini builds into an organic looking setup, and without much variation they get a bit repetitive to make too. Some of the builds just look plain odd; micro figure Dementors do not work next to full size LEGO tree branch elements, while a massive Triwizard Cup is totally out of scale next to a minifigure.

Some of the locations will have even ardent Potter fans scratching their heads. At this scale it is pretty hard to recognise what they are supposed to be. This is particularly true of the Hall of Prophecy, which is a stack of black plates and translucent blue studs for the crystal balls, yet the archway above it makes it look more like the Veil. Hagrid's flying motorbike is included, yet it could be almost anything hovering above the dark blue cheese slopes.

It's not all hexes and dodgy spells though, as there are some standout builds. Gringotts is

Neville receives a sword for Christmas.



There are LEGO bricks behind each door.



VERDICT

A LEGO advent calendar is already a novelty and the board game layer detracts from rather than enhances this year's Harry Potter edition.

58/100

easy to recognise in miniature and the Ukrainian Ironbelly has fantastic parts usage, especially the fang pieces for its wings. A tiny Whomping Willow repurposes brown stalk elements for its branches, while the Knight Bus brings a much-needed splash of colour. An absolute highlight is Professor Slughorn disguised as a sofa, which is great fun.

Where 76404 really excels is the characters. Most of the minifigures included offer something new, or at least a relatively cheap way to snag a certain character. Tonks is totally unique, sporting her Order of the Phoenix outfit and a brilliant face print of her shapeshifting nose in goose beak form. Sirius Black could also be based on this

film, wearing a new striped shirt. Harry, Professor Snape, and Voldemort can all be found in other sets, though Voldemort has a new print depicting his forked tongue sticking out, which is very creepy.

Moaning Myrtle feels like a bit of a downgrade on her Collectible Minifigures counterpart, forgoing dark blues and aqua, so she doesn't seem quite as ghostly. However, the best of the bunch is Neville Longbottom inspired by his Deathly Hallows appearance, wielding the Sword of Gryffindor to defeat Nagini. This box is also currently the cheapest way to get the special sword piece.

Once every door has been opened and the

models built, the game can be played. It has simple mechanics so fans of all ages can easily understand the rules. Every build goes into the centre of the board and a spinning dice instructs each player to take, return or steal a piece. The first to an eight combination, through either baseplate colours or by movie, wins.

76404 Harry Potter Advent Calendar is a great idea, but not for Christmas. This would have been a fine concept to include in a little standalone set to be played with all year round, but the lack of a festive connection means it doesn't quite work as an advent calendar. ■

At least Tonks isn't a sofa.



Classic Hogwarts icons.

This may be the creepiest Voldemort yet.



Myrtle promises not to moan over the holidays.



There are 24 doors to open.

Price: £29.99, \$44.99, €34.99 / **Minifigures:** 6 / **Pieces:** 268

76231 GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY ADVENT CALENDAR

This year's LEGO Marvel advent calendar reveals that Rocket can roast a turkey and Nebula's not a Grinch

Words & Pics: Kat Rees-Jauke

VERDICT

Fantastically festive minifigures of the Guardians are paired with hits from the movies – but where is Gamora?

70/100

WHEN IT COMES to the Marvel multiverse, pretty much anything goes. The timeline(s) allow for multiple versions of the same character, heroes going into the past to change events or saving the galaxy while celebrating the festive season. Director James Gunn is taking the Guardians of the Galaxy on a Christmas adventure in a Disney+ holiday special, bringing Phase 4 to a close while decking the halls. It's clear that 76231 is tying in with the holiday shenanigans, as Groot becomes a Christmas tree and even Drax has been persuaded to cover his abs with a cosy jumper.

It might sound like a novel concept, but there's actually a long history of holiday specials in the Marvel comics, going all the way back to the 1960s. There's been just about everything, from

an X-Men Xmas to Doctor Strange throwing a winter party in the Sanctum Sanctorum. With the LEGO designers likely not given much source material from the Holiday Special in order to avoid spoilers, 76231 feels like a greatest hits

76231 FEELS LIKE A GREATEST HITS ALBUM OF THE GUARDIANS' ADVENTURES

album of the Guardians' adventures.

The mini builds in this advent calendar are split into two types – those designed to accompany the minifigures and those that are inspired by

the two movies. There's a really good balance between them and they offer play opportunities day by day. Each Guardian is provided for in some way and has a selection of builds that match their personalities and would look at home aboard their ship.

Star-Lord has his trusty cassette tape (which is a newly printed 1x2 tile) that goes along with an old-style stereo system. Rocket naturally comes with explosives and a box of treasures, featuring everything from Anulax batteries to a mechanical eyeball he picked up somewhere.

As for the film references, the ships are recognisable. There's the bright blue and yellow of the Milano, the tiny spherical mining pods used on Knowhere, and a micro-scale version of the Benatar. These are all quite tricky for an advent

Rocket selects from his tools.



Is cutlery a metaphor?



It's the Guardians' Christmas party.



calendar, as the tiny instructions on the door flaps don't show everything clearly, so fans may want to have the product images handy for some parts placement guidance. One ship looks like the Dark Aster used by Ronan, though it could be something new from the upcoming special.

While 76231 is accurate to the films, it's also sprinkled throughout with festive delights. The Guardians of the Galaxy are a dysfunctional found family, so Christmas with them isn't going to be normal, which the box of builds brilliantly conveys. Rocket is roasting the turkey using a massive flamethrower, someone's built a snowman of Thanos that's definitely going to

become target practice and Groot has grown himself into a walking Christmas tree.

76231 Guardians of the Galaxy Advent Calendar delivers almost the whole crew, half of those minifigures being exclusive. Peter Quill is very similar to his previous appearance in 76193, only missing his dual-moulded legs. Both Rocket and Mantis are the same, so this set is a really great way to get the Guardians for a relatively low price. It's Drax and Nebula who steal the show. Drax has a dancing Baby Groot jumper, featuring printed musical notes on both sides. As for Nebula, she is sporting a blue Christmas sweater that's got Thanos on the front and Gamora on the

back, clearly referencing her family.

But where is Gamora? Or why is Gamora? She's noticeably absent from 76231 and that must be deliberate. This year's Harry Potter advent calendar has seven minifigures at the same price point... it suggests that the most dangerous woman in the galaxy is still at large after the events of Avengers: Endgame.

76231 Guardians of the Galaxy Advent Calendar is a great holiday treat for fans of Star-Lord and the crew, perfectly mixing festive fun alongside its sci-fi elements, and is a great way to count down the days waiting not only for Christmas, but the Holiday Special too. ■

It's Secret Santa time.



Will Star-Lord save Christmas?



How not to roast a turkey.



Mantis is shredding some tunes.



Price: £214.99, \$249.99, €249.99 / **Minifigures:** 9 / **Pieces:** 2,708

76218 SANCTUM SANCTORUM

Marvel fans from any universe will enjoy building this minifigure scale Sanctum Sanctorum

Words & Pics: Kat Rees-Jauke

VERDICT

This model is as magical to build as it is to look at, with the standards of the Modular Building Collection bringing something special to Marvel Super Heroes.

92/100

SITTING UNASSUMINGLY ON Bleecker Street, the Sanctum Sanctorum looks like any other townhouse, yet inside are the secret headquarters for the sorcerers of New York – under the watchful guardianship of the Sorcerer Supreme Wong (Sorry, Doctor Strange, but you're out on a technicality). Its previous LEGO rendition, 76108 Sanctum Sanctorum Showdown, focused on the action-adventure of Avengers: Infinity War. This time though, the designers have gone bigger and while it may appear relatively plain on the outside, this model is packed with details to make sure 76218 is worthy of the Mystic Arts.

As you can probably tell by looking at it, the Sanctum Sanctorum offers more than just a typical Marvel location model. It is built in the same style as a modular building and has the sophisticated techniques that fans have come to expect from that series. Most of its pieces go into making the building as accurate as possible, from the complex brickwork to the iconic circular window in the roof. It is a stunning structure to look at and could easily sit alongside 10243

Parisian Restaurant or 10270 Bookshop.

While 76218 is aimed at Marvel fans, anyone who has built a modular building will recognise the kind of techniques used. There's ingenious parts usage everywhere and surprises for even the most ardent collectors. Everything starts with the streets of New York on a 32x32 baseplate

THIS SET WILL REALLY REWARD YOUR MARVEL KNOWLEDGE

as the sidewalks are tiled in various dark and light greys. Shiny 1x2 grille tiles make effective little drains, with a few studded tiles mixed in for displaying minifigures on later. Around the back is a yellow dumpster and while that may not sound exciting, inside is a fun little reference to Thor: Ragnarok.

Moving inside the Sanctum, the tiling continues, though this time in dark tan to

replicate the patterned parquet seen in the films. What's so impressive are the details included within this first layer considering most of it is covered by the end. A brand new translucent blue Tesseract brick is hidden underneath the stairs, while a fridge door in one corner has a poster for karaoke night (clearly Wong's). While most tie into the films, there are still nods to the gothic Victorian styling of the entrance hall, including a grandfather clock, a beautiful sepia globe and the comfy green armchairs seen in Spider-Man: No Way Home.

Some of these details are brick built or newly printed elements, but the majority of the references are provided by stickers. There are two big sticker sheets included in 76218 Sanctum Sanctorum, but they are so well designed and vital to bringing the model to life that they don't detract from the building experience. It's great fun identifying each one, such as the Ten Rings symbol or an advert for shawarma. It's obvious that the designers have really taken the effort to include as many of the movies and television

The attic is full of relics.



Memories from across the multiverse.



Time for a foamy drink with Thor.



Sinister Strange makes his debut.



Things have gotten Dead Strange.



The size fits
with modular
buildings.



Don't drink Mordo's tea.



There's Marvel graffiti and litter.



Here comes Spidey.



series as possible. This set will really reward your Marvel knowledge.

Once the first layer is complete, all of the other floors are built separately to the rest of the model, allowing family or friends to build this set together. Within the second floor is also the main working feature of the model. In between the bookcases is a doorway that opens up to different dimensions via a lever brilliantly hidden within an air conditioning unit. Doctor Strange can challenge Dormammu in the Dark Dimension or send Kaecilius's minions into the desert. It's a really neat play feature.

76218 Sanctum Sanctorum isn't static on the shelf, with plenty of ways to make it dynamic. Two portals can be created without a nifty Sling Ring, so the sorcerers can make a dramatic entrance. Part of Gargantos is terrorising the second floor, using some of the same pieces as his bigger depiction in 76205 Gargantos Showdown. Some bricks with exposed studs have also been left across the walls, not only adding texture, but offering a spot for minifigure stands

that Spider-Man and Doctor Strange can be attached to.

The set's nine minifigures are exclusive except for Doctor Strange himself. There's a definite focus on Multiverse of Madness, as Sinister Strange comes printed with his third

SANCTUM SANCTORUM OFFERS MORE THAN JUST A TYPICAL MARVEL LOCATION MODEL

eye and Dead Strange is included too. Wanda is a disappointing compared to her Collectible Minifigures counterpart, lacking dual-moulding and her cape. The redeeming feature is that her crown is now printed, so combining the elements from both minifigures creates the perfect version.

It's great to see Mordo back, this time as his Earth-838 variant, sporting a new moulded hair

piece for his braids. Everybody else is rather generic, including the requisite Iron Man. It would have been great to see characters like America Chavez, Christine Palmer or The Ancient One instead, especially as someone as obscure as Ebony Maw manages to sneak in. He's the grey guy who works for Thanos if you're wondering.

How does this compare to its predecessor, 76178 Daily Bugle? Both are intended as impressive display sets that are homages to the comics and films, but 76218 is far less repetitive and much easier to incorporate into a LEGO display. The two would also look good side by side, contrasting types of New York building.

This is a model that combines the comic book joy of Marvel with the modular building style. It balances having an incredibly detailed interior with an attractive, faithful exterior offering plenty of options for positioning characters. It's a LEGO Marvel smorgasbord that's sure to put a spell on you when building. If there's one set worthy of bargaining with Dormammu for, then it's 76218 Sanctum Sanctorum. ■



**Gargantos is
on a rampage.**

Price: £104.99, \$119.99, €119.99 / **Minifigures:** 15 / **Pieces:** 1,164

21336 THE OFFICE

The smash-hit sitcom is captured in brick form with many reminders of what made it such a fan favourite

Words & Pics: Anthony Walker-Cook

THIRD TIME WAS a charm for LEGO fan Jaijai Lewis, whose brick treatment of the popular sitcom *The Office* had reached 10,000 votes twice before. Thanks to Jaijai's perseverance, *The Office* can now be added to the list of popular television shows that has received the brick treatment.

The set offers a real treat for any fan of the show, which ran between 2005 and 2013. Although it has been a decade since the show concluded (and even longer since the British predecessor aired), it has only become more

popular through its availability on streaming services. Who knew that a mockumentary sitcom focused on a small regional branch of Dunder Mifflin Paper Company would become such a hit?

The set itself is made up of three sections. The first build is Michael Scott's cosy office, which can be pulled out (that's what she said) from the rest of the set. Scott, for the uninitiated, is the regional manager and the show's protagonist (and often antagonist). The second section is the wider office – the build starts at the reception desk and moves on to the individual desks.

The final section is the conference room, the setting for many a pointless meeting in the show, which is probably the most disappointing part of the model. The room has been condensed, it's a bit bland and the low chairs seem out of proportion to the rest of the build (there's a similar problem in Michael's office).

However, the devil is in the detail and, as is to be expected, the entire set is absolutely chock-full of references from different seasons of the show. There's a poop under Michael's desk (Season 2, episode 14) and a Dundie trophy

Tiny builds are dotted through the model.



It delivers the workplace aesthetic.



(as seen in the show's opening credits) sitting proudly on top of the desk; there's a fax from 'future Dwight' (Season 3, episode 7) and both a Schrute buck and a Stanley nickel (the Season 3 finale) are included. There are many, many more references dotted throughout.

To achieve this level of detail, there is of course catch – sticker use. In total, 63 stickers from two sheets are applied. It's arduous work applying so many, especially when it feels like some are important enough to be printed – for example, Pam's painting of the Dunder Mifflin building. Thankfully you aren't challenged to apply a transparent label to the fluorescent dome top – the stapler encased in jello is printed.

These references and stickers are furnishing a location that hardly sparks excitement – an office. The place of the prosaic nine-to-five is faithfully created here. Each of the desktops has a (sticker) reference that's germane to the character that sits there, for example Schrute Farms is on Dwight's computer.

Office items are captured well with few pieces. The photocopier is impressively shaped and

built with various textures and angles to make this older piece of machinery look particularly outdated (Season 5, episode 10).

The television in the conference room comes with three tiles that allow you to choose what scene you want to re-create – there's the training video for new Dunder Mifflin staff with Michael and Dwight rapping (Season 3, episode

THE ENTIRE SET IS ABSOLUTELY CHOCK-FULL OF REFERENCES FROM DIFFERENT SEASONS OF THE SHOW

8), the perfectly-placed DVD logo and Ryan's live connection to the launch of 'Dunder Mifflin Infinity' (Season 4, episodes 5 and 6).

As references are incorporated into the set it's easy to enjoy a build that is otherwise not the most exciting or inventive. In particular, the

hole in the wall, courtesy of Andy Barnard (who is surprisingly not actually included in this set), is a subtle and surprising part of the model. Furthermore, the semi-circular shape and accurate colour design of Pam's reception desk is very well achieved.

If you're interested in this set, you'll be primarily coming for the 15 minifigures and there are, overall, more hits than misses. These are all office workers and so the minifigure torsos and legs are relatively plain (although there is some occasional specific detailing), which leaves the accuracy of the minifigures to be determined by the face prints (12 figures have double face prints) and hair pieces. Each minifigure does come with a personal accessory, providing another set of references to the show.

Phyllis Vance looks adorable whilst Angela Martin is suitably cranky (plus the cat brooch on her top is a nice touch). Warehouse manager Darryl Philbin is also accurate, although his not having a frustrated face as he deals with Michael's misdemeanours is disappointing. With the charming Kevin 'Ashton Kutcher' Malone



AS REFERENCES ARE INCORPORATED INTO THE SET IT'S EASY TO ENJOY A BUILD THAT IS OTHERWISE NOT THE MOST EXCITING OR INVENTIVE



minifigure you can recreate the tragic chilli incident of Season 5, episode 26.

The Michael Scott minifigure is also sound. The dual-printed headpiece captures two wildly different emotions – elation and worry – which seems apt given how often his schemes go awry.

The best minifigure is, unsurprisingly, Dwight K. Schrute, Assistant to the Regional Manager (not Assistant Regional Manager, for those who were wondering). The parted bowl-cut hairpiece and the headpiece that captures Dwight's glasses come together with the rest of the suit in that amazing colour combination of beige and yellow to create a brilliant minifigure.

VERDICT

This build experience isn't the most sophisticated, but this set will remind you of all of your favourite The Office moments.

75/100

This leaves the other nine minifigures. Some of them are by no means bad (for example, Pam Beesly or Jim Halpert), but they're just lacking something more. Elsewhere, a slightly incorrect headpiece has been chosen (Meredith Palmer's is far too young for this harassed

mother) and occasionally the wrong hairpiece is used, particularly where the men are somewhat balding.

There's one question, therefore, to ask at the end of this review – should you love this set for its level of detail or fear it for its use of stickers? Well, the answer is both. Like the other LEGO sets based on television series, 21336 The Office relies on a builder's love of the show and it's clear that a lot of thought has gone into this set.

This set gets the perfect amount of substance for the price. It's a set that will make you say 'yesh' (yes in Michael talk), even as you're applying yet another sticker. ■

Michael's office is packed with references.



You can recreate the love story.



Fans will love getting 15 minifigures.



ESSENTIALS

YOU MAY ALSO WANT...



If American sitcoms are your thing, then grab 21319 Central Perk before it retires.

MINIFIGURE SPOTLIGHT



Dwight is the stand-out minifigure, which makes sense as he is the most distinctive character visually. The designers have had great fun capturing his personality, LEGO style.

TECHNIQUE SPOTLIGHT



The office plants are neatly created using plant leaves, studs and bar with plate pieces – a simple, but effective design.

BRICK SPOTLIGHT



Jim sets Dwight's stapler in jello at the end of the pilot, which is captured brilliantly here.

HOW YOU'LL SPEND YOUR TIME WITH 21336

15%

Applying stickers

10%

Letting your The Office friends know 'it's happening!'

45%

Admiring all of the references incorporated into the set

30%

Re-creating your favourite scenes from the show.

Price: £259.99, \$299.99, €299.99 / **Minifigures:** 2 / **Pieces:** 2,065

21335 **MOTORISED LIGHTHOUSE**

Does this Ideas set shine brightly enough to attract the attention of LEGO fans?

Words: David Cartlidge **Pics:** Phil Wrighton

VERDICT

An innovative and engaging build showcases an ingenious new element and incorporates functions while still looking beautiful.

89/100

MAGICAL CHILDHOOD MEMORIES of visiting lighthouses with his parents inspired Sandro Quattrini to submit his towering build to the LEGO Ideas platform. This clearly struck a chord with other fans and his concept was approved before being swiftly translated into 21335 Motorised Lighthouse. There's a strange nobility about lighthouses, standing alone against the elements and fighting the darkness. As maritime history fans themselves, the LEGO design team were keen to capture this feeling and incorporate as much of that wonder into the model as possible. They succeeded.

The essence of the original design has been captured perfectly although quite a few changes have been made along the way, the most significant being the upgrade to minifigure scale. Although all lighthouses are unique, the overall look seems to have been strongly inspired by Pigeon Point Lighthouse in San Francisco and looks authentic in every aspect.

Spread over two instruction booklets, the build begins with the rocky island location, formed on top of a new dark blue baseplate element. Transparent tiles create the illusion of water breaking against the rocks and tan sloped areas form the sandy mouth of caves and areas of

shoreline. Within the dark grey boundary of the island is a garish, multicoloured collection of mismatched bricks and plates that start to form areas to mount the motor that will eventually drive the lighthouse. It's not unusual for the interior of sets to feature incongruously bright elements, and often they're a guide for correct placement, but a heartwarming footnote in the instructions explains that this particular selection

IT IS A BEAUTIFUL AND COMPACT BUILD PACKED FULL OF DETAIL AND CHARM

was a deliberate choice by Sandro.

A single motor and worm gear is mounted horizontally onto four Technic pins, held in place with rubber bushes. These cleverly act as dampers, minimising vibration and noise when the lighthouse is in action. The large battery box is mounted vertically, accounting for some of the height of the rocky base, and a lighting cable is connected to it. Large rock elements do most of the heavy lifting in concealing the battery

pack and good use of vertically attached slope elements break up the standardised shapes to appear natural.

The designers have considered the practical aspects too, with one removable rocky outcrop to allow the batteries to be changed. Some recoloured plant elements and neat details like the craggy stone jetty soon take shape around the island, with a sandy cove on one side hiding a treasure chest and fingertip access to a Technic beam that toggles the power unit on.

Green plates and tiles adorn the surface of the rocky island, with the lighthouse tower being offset from the centre. At the base of the tower is the keeper's cottage. It is a beautiful and compact build packed full of detail and charm. A log stove and desk occupy one side of the room with a single bed on the other. Maps, photos, and accessories bring life to the small space and the exterior is clad in 1x1 tiles and ingots to achieve a realistic stone look. Inside the cottage, there is space for the lighthouse keeper himself, a grey-bearded fellow with a dark blue outfit and gold pocket watch. He looks remarkably happy for someone who lives alone for long periods, but the imminent arrival of a rowing boat carrying a woman (his wife, perhaps) in a green hat and

A cosy interior for the light house keeper.



It's nice to
receive a
visitor.



The special element mimics a Fresnel lens.



A bespoke element allows the set to shine.



Garage door elements enclose the light.



The tower has an interior, of sorts.



raincoat might have put this smile on his face.

The tower itself is an intriguing build. Formed around a 6x6 frame, each level is unsurprisingly similar but thankfully just different enough to avoid repetition. While there isn't enough room inside to include a spiral staircase, the ladders are a reasonable compromise and the cramped interior still manages to feature some nice details.

The exterior of the tower is clad in separate panels of overlapping curved plates and tiles. These differ in size on each level, creating a superb tapered effect as they move up the tower. The cladding also cleverly conceals the lighting power cable that snakes up one side of the tower and the long Technic axle that powers the turntable at the top. Only one of the two lights is destined for the lighthouse tower itself, however - the other is ingeniously snaked back down to the cottage, behind the stove, providing a warm orange glow to the room. It's a great addition and the hidden wiring is brilliant in its simplicity.

At the summit of the tower is where you'd expect the build to climax and you are not disappointed. The hexagonal base is topped

with a round collar of dark grey curved bricks lined with jumper plates. A large Technic cog is mounted horizontally inside this collar so that the single light bulb can be inserted into the mounting beam and shine vertically through the cog. A smaller cog that runs along the side of the tower, all the way into the base of the island, connects to this and when the hidden Technic

THE PANELS DIFFER IN SIZE ON EACH LEVEL, CREATING A SUPERB TAPERED EFFECT

beam in the cave is pressed, the large cog rotates with the light shining through its centre.

It's a terrific mechanism that works very well, but that light is still shining upwards, and a single mirrored sticker mounted at an angle is all that's needed to change its direction. The light is quite weak at this point, however, so the creation of an entirely new LEGO element was necessary. Lighthouses were revolutionised in 1821 by the

invention of the Fresnel lens, a series of layered glass rings that focus and narrow the light beam. After extensive prototyping, a LEGO Fresnel lens was created and the dramatic effect it has on the small light source is remarkable.

Once in place, the lens creates a very authentic lighthouse experience - it won't be blinding your neighbours, though. Given the right placement and ambient light, the beam is clear and bright with the perfect rotational speed to make the building come to life. The first time you operate it is truly a memorable moment. The light is housed within transparent garage door elements, another elegant improvement on the original design, then flexible hose guard rails complete the tower.

You don't have to be an expert in maritime history to enjoy the build experience. You don't need to be a lighthouse expert to admire the technical accuracy or details. What you may need is a suitable space to display it and deep pockets to afford it. Price rises aside, this is an expensive set, largely due to the Powered Up elements that it requires. That's a real shame because this is a great build experience that deserves to be enjoyed by everyone. ■

This is a unique new minifigure.



Who needs a staircase when a ladder will do?



Price: £89.99, \$99.99, €99.99 / **Minifigures:** 6 / **Pieces:** 1,514

10308 HOLIDAY MAIN STREET

This year's Winter Village Collection set heads down Main Street to offer something distinct

Words & Pics: Graham Hancock

VERDICT

This disjointed Christmas set doesn't live up to the standard that this series has offered in the past.

62/100

WHEN 10199 WINTER Toy Shop started the collection of charming Christmas buildings in 2009, it offered an intricate, detailed building with a cosy interior. That format continued year after year, with a focus on detailed, realistic greeting card buildings that could build out a beautiful layout. A few fantastical sets have deviated from this run, before last year's 10293 Santa's Visit offered a more modern building that stepped away from the series' traditions.

This year's model takes a much larger step away from what the Winter Village Collection has been previously; for those who had been hoping

to further expand their snow-covered villages, this might be disappointing; but for those who are ready for this series to start afresh, this could be a promising first set.

Last year's set offered one sizable, detailed house. 10308 Holiday Main Street offers two shops, a trolley car and a Christmas tree for the same price. That means that these buildings are significantly smaller than those offered previously, although the trolley car's scale has not been affected. It makes for a set that's disjointed and disappointing for long term Winter Village Collection fans.

If this were the first ever set in a Christmas collection then it would be delightful – you can't help but smile when constructing a charming little building with a snow-covered roof. Indeed, H. Jollie's Music Store and Santa's Toys and Games are fun to build, with the walls coming together quickly and neat little sub-assemblies for the interiors. These are incredibly simple buildings though, especially given the 18+ age marking.

Fortunately the trolley car is much more interesting to put together, following some of the methods that are common in official train sets. It's a lovely addition to the Christmassy vehicles

There are several instruments to choose from.



A second tree is hidden inside.



The trolley car fits several minifigures.



that have been offered over the years, but bizarrely it seems to be in scale more with the old Winter Village sets rather than this one; it's taller than the ground floor of the buildings, making it look really odd on display next to them.

There's the option to add Powered Up components (not included in the set) to the trolley car to get it moving. Given that these vehicles typically run on track that's recessed into the ground, LEGO train tracks would be a bit excessive and visually obtrusive if they were used to run the car.

A couple of traditions from past sets remain – you build a snowy little section, with an ornate clock featuring the sign for Main Street above a post box. The Christmas tree is cleverly built with wedge plates and cheese slopes, forming a lovely shape when complete.

The collection of minifigures is good and they are perfect for populating the street. The trolley car conductor uses the same torso as

the lighthouse keeper from 21335 Motorized Lighthouse and the two shoppers are wearing funky sweaters. The two shop keepers look perfect for their respective outlets and a child rounds out the characters.

This set isn't as simple as recent City sets...

IT MAKES FOR A SET THAT'S DISAPPOINTING FOR LONG TERM WINTER VILLAGE COLLECTION FANS

but in the same way that a 2022 City set with road plates is a much, much more basic model than a 2018 City set, this is a much, much more basic set than is expected from the Winter Village Collection. If it wasn't for the decidedly un-festive black box and 18+ age marking, you would

assume that a decision had been made to target these models at a younger audience.

A neat touch in this model are the four instruction books, allowing a family to build it together in a very obvious way without having to share a single book. The one risk with this approach being used too often is that families only see models like this, with multiple components, as opportunities to group build. It can be even more rewarding to build a single model together, taking it turns to pass and place bricks, as it engages everyone in what's being built rather than everyone focusing on their own aspect of the model.

LEGO building and Christmas go together like mince pies and brandy butter, so you are likely to find joy in this festive set – but fans know what the LEGO design team has delivered in the past. This does not live up to what fans expect from the Winter Village Collection and disappointingly is the series' weakest model yet. ■

There are two stores on Main Street.



HALL OF FAME

The sets you need in your collection, according to Blocks reviewers

1

10294 Titanic

i Theme: For Adults / **Year:** 2021 / **Issue:** 88



That Titanic has been executed at this size with such a solid and detailed set is remarkable.

100/100

2

21322 Pirates of Barracuda Bay

i Theme: Ideas / **Year:** 2020 / **Issue:** 67



Combines the nostalgia of classic Pirates with a sophisticated building experience, for a true LEGO masterpiece.

100/100

3

10265 Ford Mustang

i Theme: Creator Expert / **Year:** 2019 / **Issue:** 55



Easily the coolest car to come out of the Creator Expert theme, the Ford Mustang fine-tunes LEGO vehicle design to perfection.

100/100

4

76139 1989 Batmobile

i Theme: DC Super Heroes / **Year:** 2019 / **Issue:** 64



An incredible way to celebrate Batman's twin anniversaries in 2019, this is the greatest LEGO Batmobile.

99/100

5

76391 Hogwarts Icons – Collectors' Edition

i Theme: Wizarding World / **Year:** 2021 / **Issue:** 83



These Harry Potter props are a delight to build, but really impress thanks to the final model's exceptional visual composition.

99/100

6

70620 NINJAGO City

i Theme: The LEGO NINJAGO Movie / **Year:** 2017 / **Issue:** 36



There are few sets that can compare to NINJAGO City's size, scope and almost overwhelming level of detail and technique.

98/100

7

10257 Carousel

i Theme: Creator Expert / **Year:** 2017 / **Issue:** 34



This welcome addition to LEGO fairgrounds is a work of art, and far more detailed than its much-revered predecessor.

98/100

8

21317 Steamboat Willie

i Theme: Ideas / **Year:** 2019 / **Issue:** 56



This monochromatic blast from Disney's past doesn't need any sprinkling of pixie dust, as it's pure magic from start to finish.

98/100

9

70904 Clayface Splat Attack

i Theme: The LEGO Batman Movie / **Year:** 2017 / **Issue:** 28



A creative and effective build that ensures a wide and valid appeal. Proof that great things come in small packages.

98/100

10

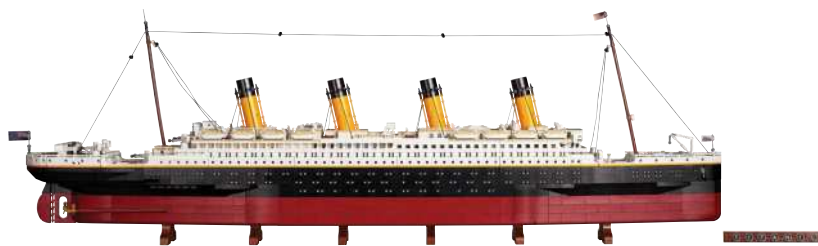
75313 AT-AT

i Theme: Star Wars / **Year:** 2021 / **Issue:** 87



The Ultimate Collector Series AT-AT justifies its incredible piece count and delivers a toy that lives up to what fans have dreamed of.

97/100



11

71741 NINJAGO City Gardens

Theme: NINJAGO / Year: 2021 / Issue: 77



This beautiful and detailed model is a worthy follow-up to 70620 NINJAGO City, using its incredible piece count to excellent effect.

97/100

12

70618 Destiny's Bounty

Theme: The LEGO NINJAGO Movie / Year: 2017 / Issue: 36



A highly detailed and exquisitely-designed vessel (with not a moulded hull in sight) for the full roster of ninja to enjoy.

97/100

13

10305 Lion Knights' Castle

Theme: Icons / Year: 2022 / Issue: 94



Nostalgia and history combine for a beautiful set that demands to be played with.

96/100

14

10497 Galaxy Explorer

Theme: Icons / Year: 2022 / Issue: 94



The size of 10497 Galaxy Explorer has been increased to make every adult who builds it feel like a child again – and it succeeds.

96/100

15

75192 Millennium Falcon

Theme: Star Wars / Year: 2017 / Issue: 40



A nearly perfect immortalisation of the fastest hunk of junk in the galaxy – as long as you can stomach the size and price.

96/100

16

10266 NASA Apollo 11 Lunar Lander

Theme: Creator Expert / Year: 2019 / Issue: 58



A timely and worthy celebration of a historic event, the Lunar Lander is a stunning display piece and rewarding build.

96/100

17

80105 Chinese New Year Temple Fair

Theme: Seasonal / Year: 2019 / Issue: 65



This is a beautifully-presented set with no cut corners, no lack of attention to detail, and absolutely no reason to not pick it up.

96/100

18

76052 Batman Classic TV Series – Batcave

Theme: DC Super Heroes / Year: 2016 / Issue: 19



Offers an unrivalled Bat-experience, with plenty of Bat-love having gone into the Bat-design phase. Did we mention Bats?

96/100

19

70841 Benny's Space Squad

Theme: The LEGO Movie 2 / Year: 2019 / Issue: 53



The question isn't whether you should buy this colourful celebration of Classic Space, but how many copies is enough.

96/100

20

10274 Ghostbusters ECTO-1

Theme: Ghostbusters / Year: 2020 / Issue: 75



A fantastic build experience that leads to a superb display set. I ain't afraid of no complex techniques.

95/100

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Is a worldwide Facebook group that was created over 9 years ago by a Mother & Son in order to bring together all LEGO enthusiasts to share in their creations.

Our rapidly expanding group, is the largest and fastest growing Community with over 90,000 great members worldwide, whether you have just started collecting LEGO in your spare time, or are a dedicated Lifetime fan, we have it all here in our strong well built group, giving you every chance to share in that wonderful LEGO experience with those like you.

The group is carefully run with a strong friendly Admin team, whom consistently monitor regular posts, always offering their best help and advice should you need them, in between accepting hundreds of new members daily from all corners of the world.

After agreeing to the rules, stressing "honesty & fairness" Members are then given the opportunity to either sell their unwanted LEGO, Swap it for something they desire, ask for parts or sets wanted, or simply just join in the fun to showcase your superb collection.

All for the Love of Bricks

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76405 HOGWARTS EXPRESS – COLLECTORS' EDITION

One lucky subscriber will be drawn at random to win the set.

Everyone who subscribes to Blocks by **November 30, 2022** will gain entry into the next and all subsequent **monthly** draws. Existing subscribers will also be automatically entered into every draw. Good luck!

This competition is open to anyone who subscribes to a Blocks Magazine subscription, except employees of the Promoter, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the Promotion. Each participant can only enter once during the Promotion Period. The competition will be open from 9.00am (BST) on November 2, 2022 to 5.00pm November 30, 2022 (the "Promotion Period"). Any entries outside of the Promotion Period will not be counted. One overall competition winner will be chosen by the Publisher of Blocks Magazine. The decision of the Promoter in relation to the Promotion is final. No correspondence will be entered into. No information regarding entries or judging will be disclosed to any third party not involved in the conduct of the Promotion. The prize is not transferable, re-saleable or exchangeable. There is no cash alternative. The promoter reserves the right to substitute any of the prize products subject to availability. Winners will be announced in a future issue of Blocks magazine and on our social media pages. Winners must respond to notification of their prize within 48 hours otherwise the right to claim the prize will be lost and the promoter reserves the right to re-award the prize(s). No entries from agents, third parties, organised groups or applications automatically generated by computers will be accepted. No incomplete or corrupted entries will be accepted. Any entries not in accordance with the entry instructions will be rejected. Any entries containing offensive or inappropriate content will be removed. By entering participants will be deemed to have accepted and be bound by the rules. All entry instructions form part of these Terms and Conditions. In the event of unforeseen circumstances the Promoters reserve the right to offer alternative prizes of equal or greater value. The Promoter reserves the right to amend, alter or terminate this promotion at any time due to circumstances beyond its control. The Promoter's decision is final and binding in all matters relating to the promotion. The Promoter can accept no responsibility for, and reserves the right to refuse, entries which are corrupt, incomplete or fail to arrive by the closing date. These rules are governed by English law and subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts. Promoter & Data Controller: Silverback Publishing Ltd



497 Galaxy Explorer from 1979.



MOD SQUAD 10497 GALAXY EXPLORER

The classic Galaxy Explorer is back and bigger than before, so the set's iconic crater baseplate needs upscaling as well

Words and Pics: Daniel Konstanski



This brick built version is constructed on a 48x48 baseplate.

WHEN THE ICONIC Galaxy Explorer debuted in 1979, the ship itself was accompanied by a pair of baseplates. Designers initially intended for a series of road plates to be released alongside most of the large Space sets that would have enabled the creation of an intergalactic city in the same way that standard Town road plates facilitated laying out urban metropolises.

The idea didn't really take off with Space, but since the theme was only a year old when 497 Galaxy Explorer came out, a 32x32 baseplate with landing pad print, which would have doubled as a four-way intersection road plate, was included. The other baseplate in the box would go on to become as synonymous with Classic Space as the colour combination of blue, grey and transparent yellow; the crater.

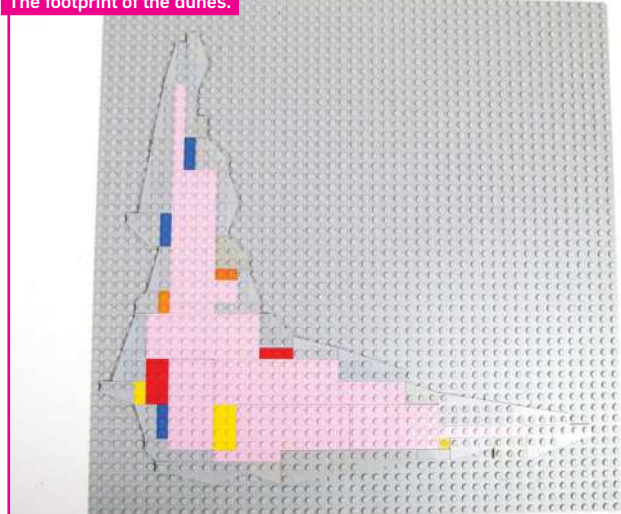
During the 1980s, designers were beginning to experiment with vacuum forming to create raised baseplates. The crater baseplate served as one of the first successful experiments with the new technique. Portions of a standard 32x32 baseplate were raised at different levels and given a somewhat rough texture to depict sand dunes and craters, evoking a surface strewn with meteor impacts. Crater baseplates would be used in almost all large Classic Space, Futuron and Blacktron base sets.

While there were conversations about trying to resurrect the beloved baseplate in some form for inclusion with the updated 10497 Galaxy Explorer, time and costs prevented it. Fortunately, that makes for a good excuse to build one instead. Because the ship is larger now, the base needs to be larger too – so this is built on a 48x48 stud baseplate, the largest currently produced by the LEGO Group, using slopes, wedge plates and other elements, most of which didn't even exist at the time of the original set's release.

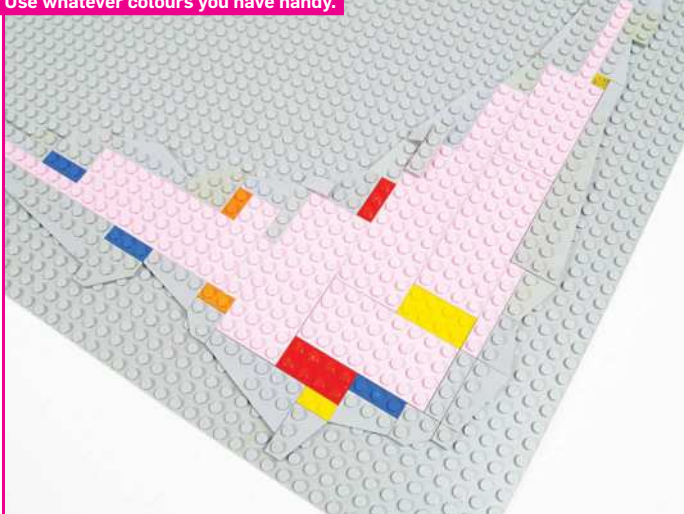
LAYING OUT THE FOOTPRINT

48x48 baseplates in grey are readily available. Begin by using wedge plates to form a perimeter shape. The original Crater Baseplate was measured so that this version can approximate its original proportions as closely as possible, but this shape is by no means the only option. Use whatever parts you have. The intent is to both define the shape of the dunes and use the one plate height as a transition into the rest of the slopes. Interior sections are in alternate colours to make everything clearer – they'll be covered by the end.

The footprint of the dunes.



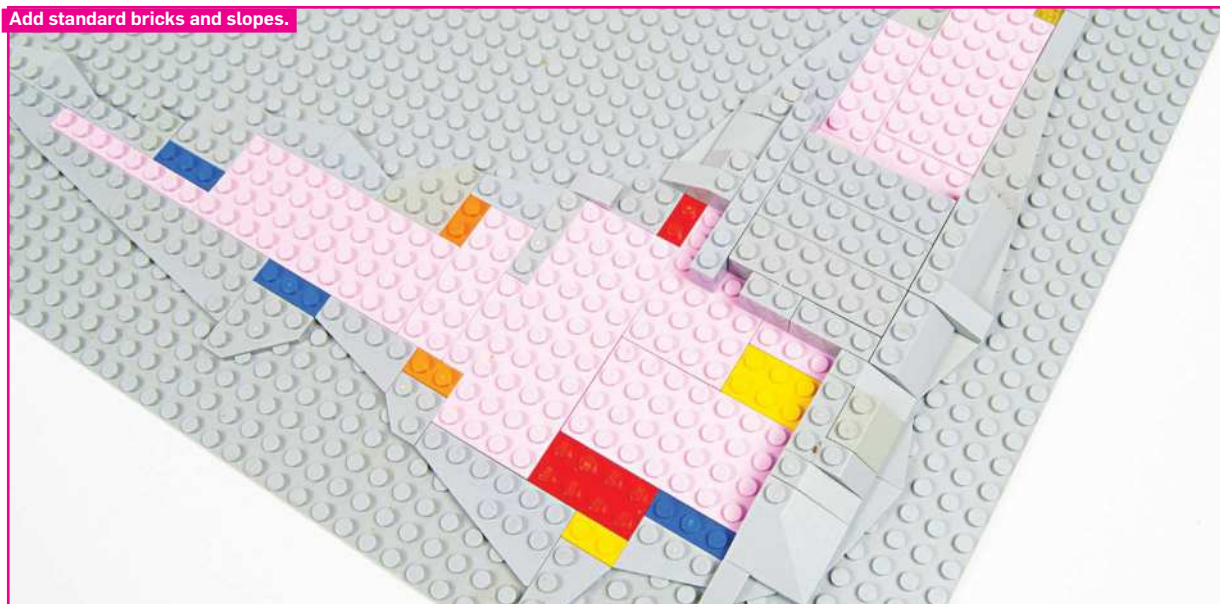
Use whatever colours you have handy.



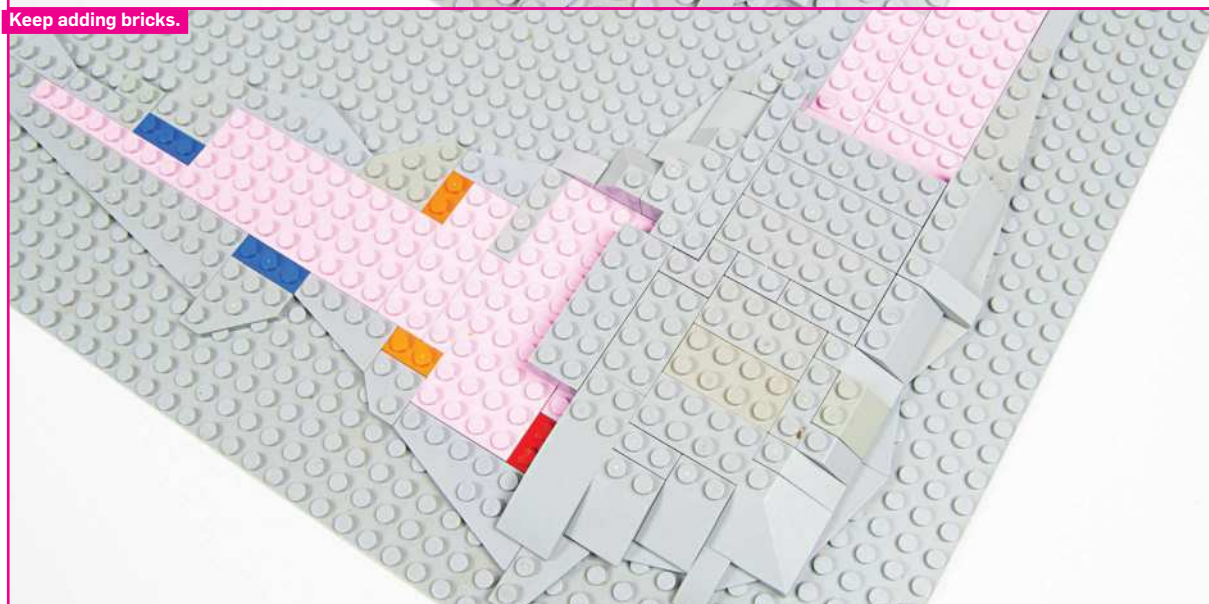
CENTRE BASE

Next, build up the centre of the dune. This will be the highest point, so it gets a full layer of bricks beneath. This will taper into shorter sections as each dune extends out.

Add standard bricks and slopes.



Keep adding bricks.



Different slopes can be used, this is just a guide.

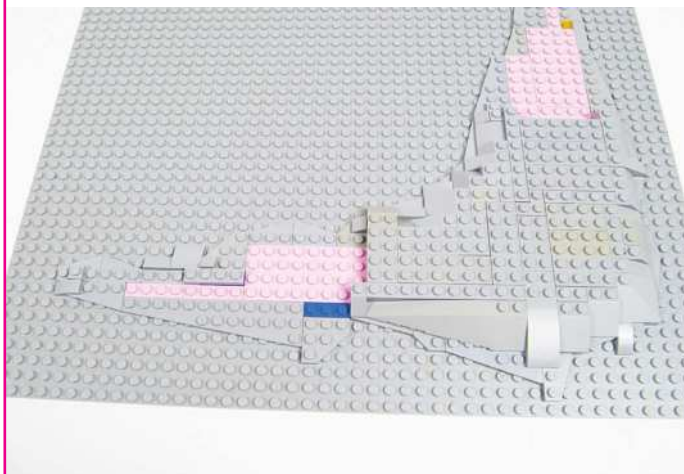


EDGES

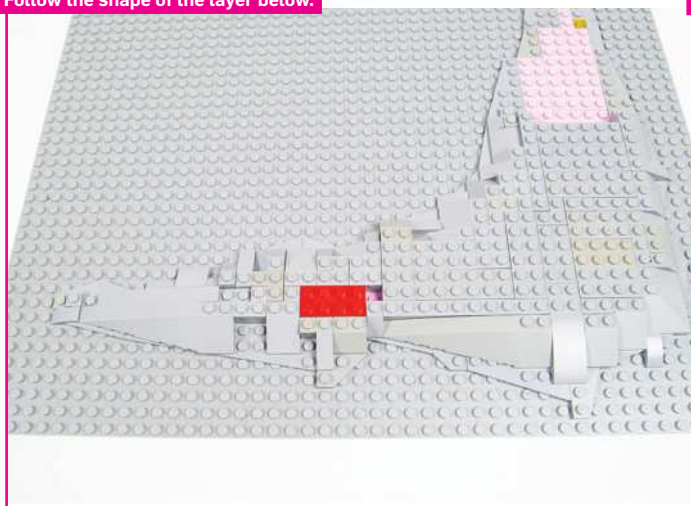
With the centre base layer complete, move out to the edges and fill them in with a combination of bricks, slopes and wedges. The exact shape and combination doesn't matter, use the bricks available to you – but make sure that you hide all of the studs.



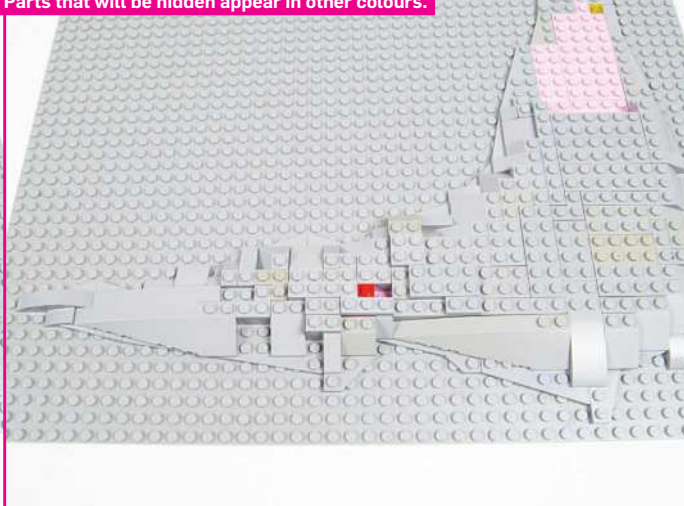
Start at the end and work your way in.



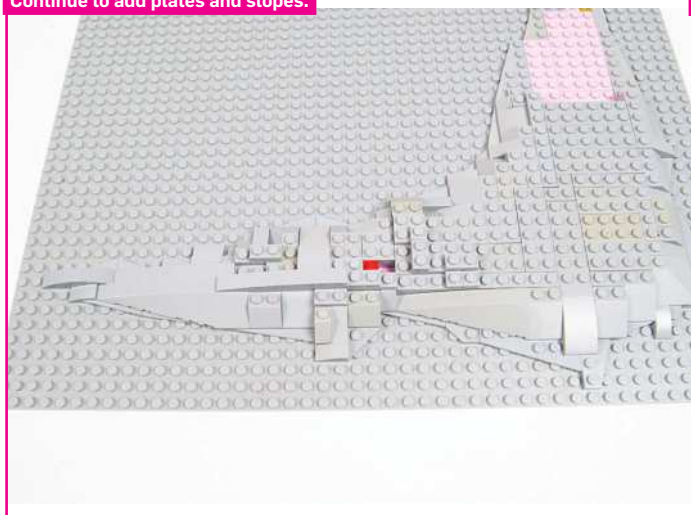
Follow the shape of the layer below.



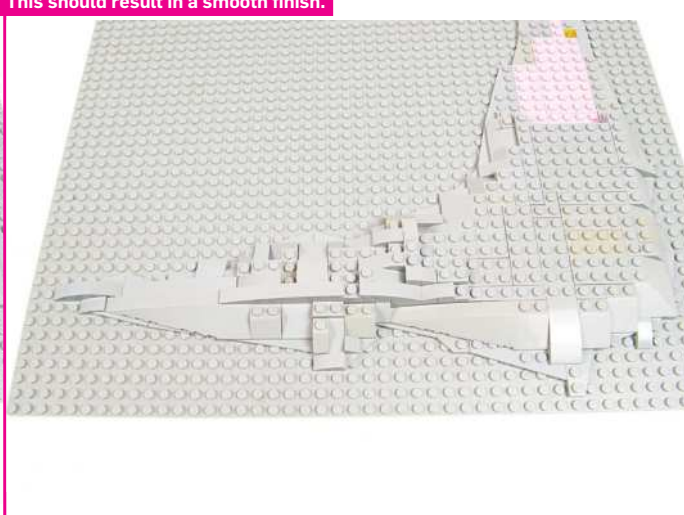
Parts that will be hidden appear in other colours.



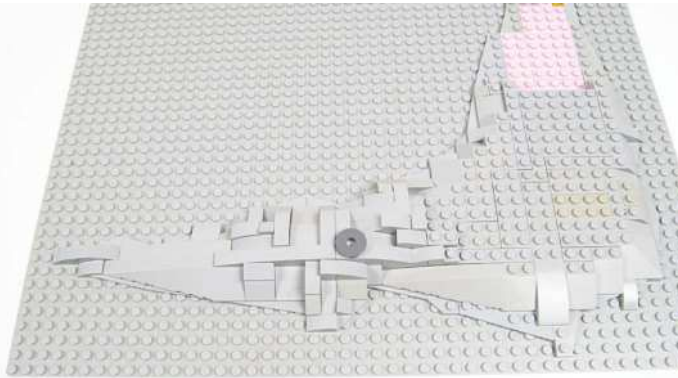
Continue to add plates and slopes.



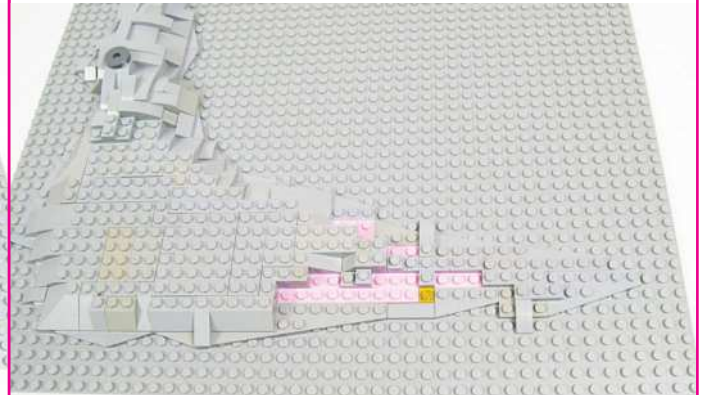
This should result in a smooth finish.



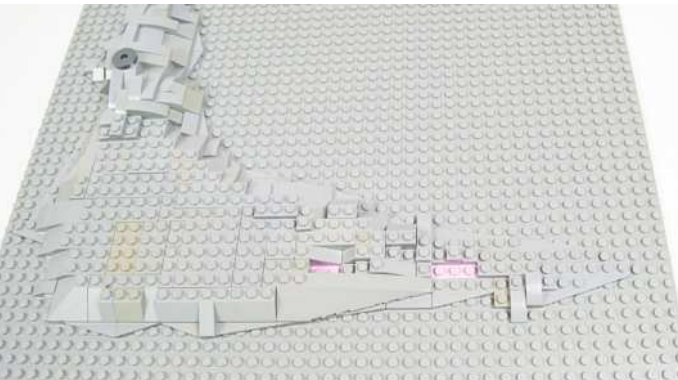
Dark grey doughnut tiles depict smaller craters.



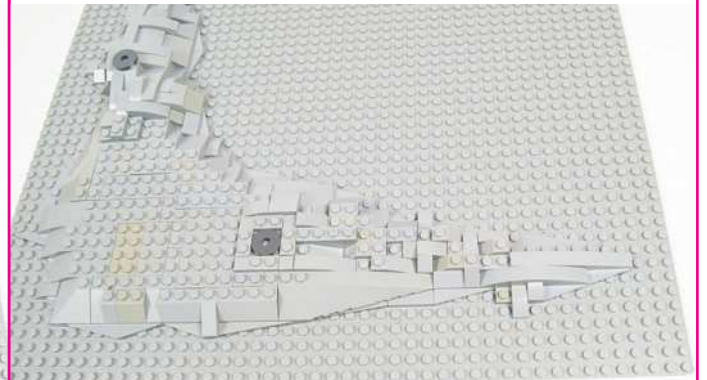
Switch to the other side of the baseplate.



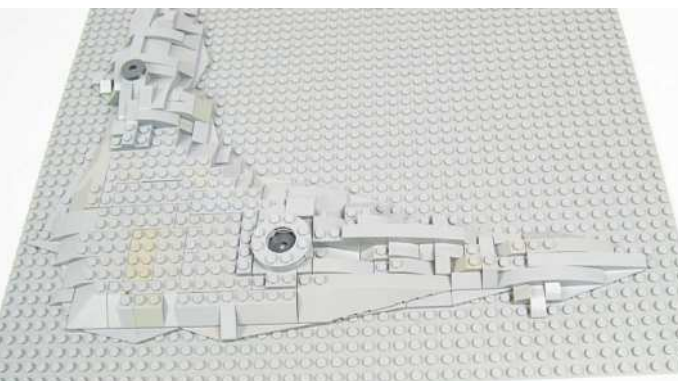
Use the same methods on this side.



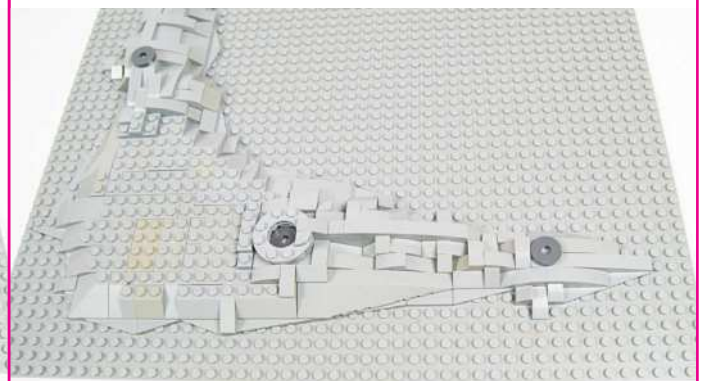
Build it up with plates, slopes and shaped elements.



Use 4x4 round doughnut plates for the smaller crater.



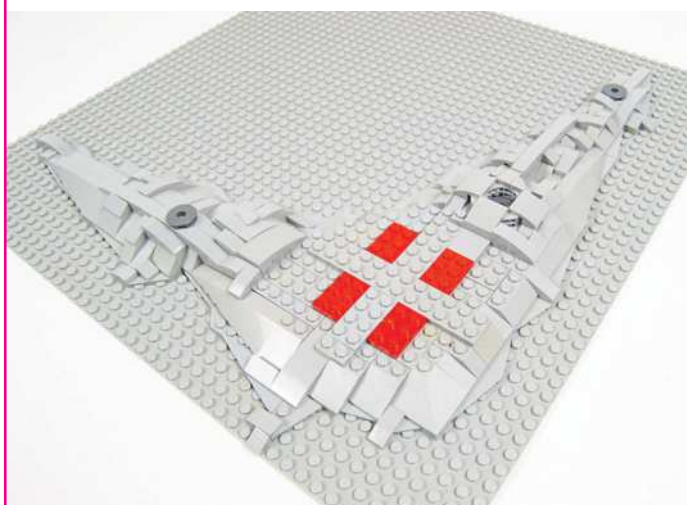
Cover the remaining studs.



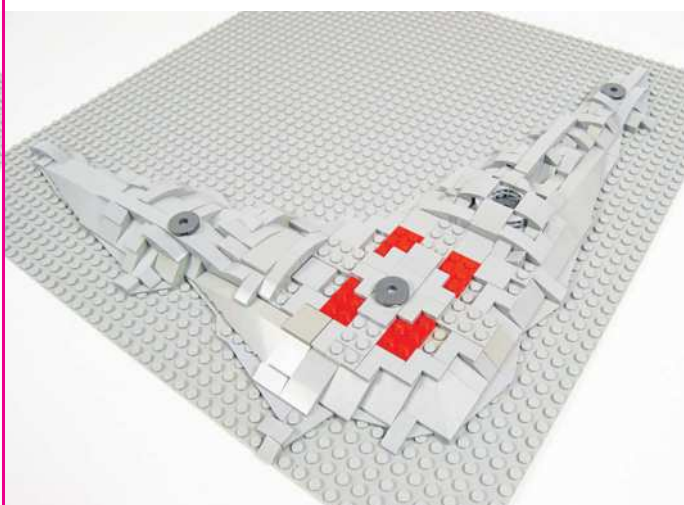
CENTRE CRATER

The reason the original is known as the crater baseplate stems from the large indentation near its upper corner. Thanks to curved elements, this same effect can be achieved on a much larger scale.

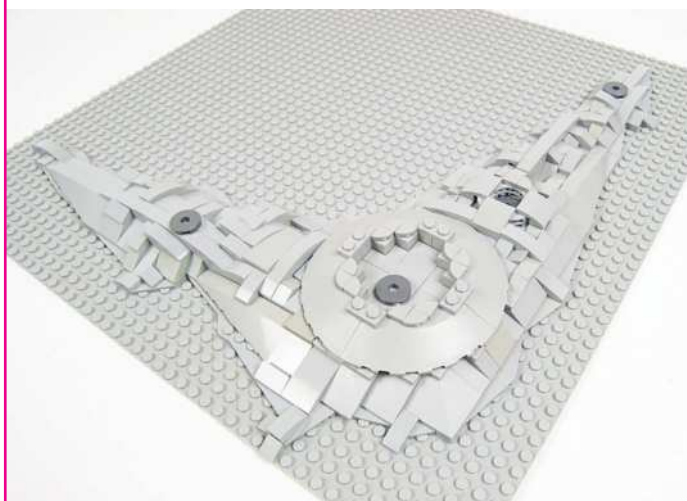
Return to the centre to complete the large crater.



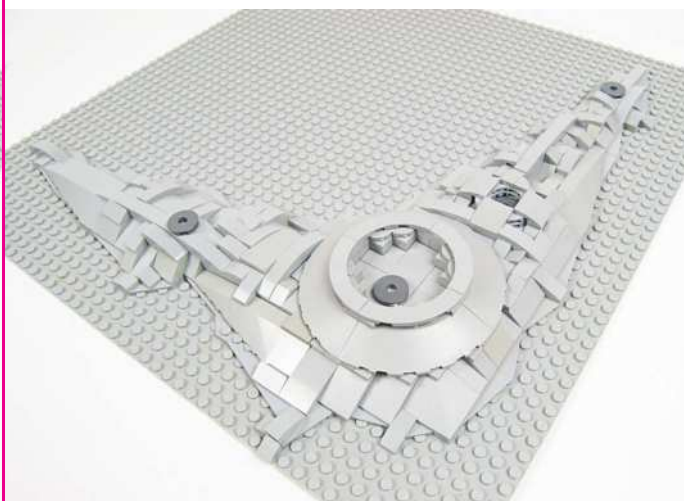
These plates will fill form the crater's bottom.



Four large, curved elements make the crater's walls.



Cover the crater's studs with large, curved tiles.



TEXTURE

An advantage to building this is that additional texture and smaller craters can be added to the surface. This can be accomplished with cheese slopes, plates and additional small, curved elements. ■

Different approaches can be used to add texture.

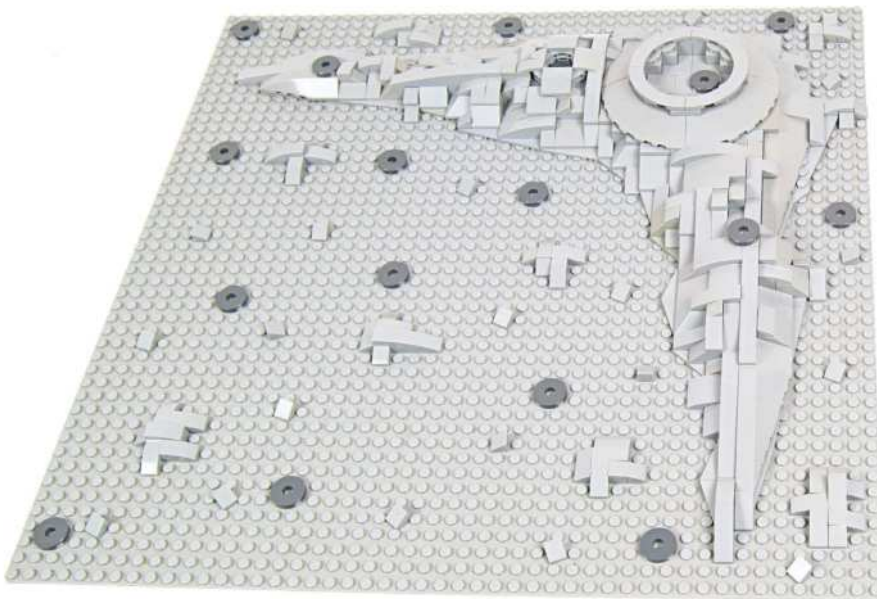


Build little rocky areas.



A lunar landscape.





Side by side
with the
original.

KEY



1X1 BAR



1X1 BRICK



1X1 CONE



1X1 PIZZA TILE



1X1 ROUND BRICK



1X1 ROUND TILE



1X1 TILE



1X2 JUMPER PLATE



1X2 PANEL



1X2 PLATE



1X4 BOW



2X2 ROUND PLATE



2X2 TILE



2X4 PLATE



DALEK



GLIDING TILE



SATELLITE DISH



TECH PIN WITH STUD



TECHNIC BALL

CREATIVE GAMING

Enjoy a night in with these tips and tricks for designing LEGO board games

Words & Pics: Simon Pickard



BOARD GAMES FREQUENTLY utilise beautiful designs and innovative game play. Many that you remember growing up with are no longer available, others have been lost to time, while those that were limited edition releases during the recent game resurgence might now be prohibitively expensive. Thanks to LEGO pieces, there's still a way to play such games.

This month's guide takes a look at ways that you can build board games using the LEGO elements you have in your brick stash (and maybe top up with a BrickLink order or two).

It is worth taking note of how the concepts and ideas flow and combine throughout each of the models shown here. You might want to build an entirely different game to the ones presented here, so by using these techniques in combination you'll be ready to construct your personal favourite.

SOURCING THE GAME

It is possible to source reference photographs of board games and watch

training for most games online. This means that anyone can create a playable version in LEGO pieces without having, or sourcing, the official game materials.

SNAIL'S PACE RACE

This is a simple and fun game that also shows how it easy to create playable board games using LEGO elements that also look beautiful enough to attract an adult's attention.

It would have been possible to create smaller movement squares using only the 2x2 jumper plates. However, the visual appeal of a game is also an important part of its overall experience. Here the addition of some pizza tiles to turn the movement places into an oval shape helps add a degree of elegance to the presentation.

The game obviously doesn't need any of the garden vegetation to support gameplay. However, the beautiful three-dimensional nature of this board draws people into the experience, also providing a conversation starter or display piece on the coffee table.

If these specific games appeal to you

then you'll be able to learn how to play from online videos. Essentially the game has one simple rule; roll the two dice and move the snails one space according to the corresponding colours on the dice.

To make the dice, you'll need LEGO dice elements from the LEGO Games theme. While they are retired, fortunately they are available for a few pennies. You'll find them listed under 'human tools' on BrickLink. For games needing numbers you can add printed 2x2 tiles, or if these are too costly perhaps create a number reference for the different colours.

There are lots of simple games like this one to discover that translate well when using this simple 'studs up' construction approach.

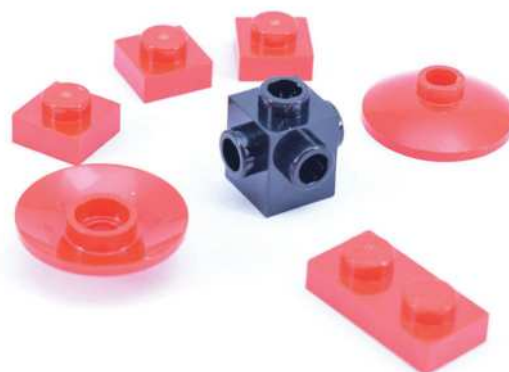
KEY CONCEPTS

Simple, strong playing pieces are essential to enable practical game play. Movement spaces do not have to be squared in every circumstance. Choosing simple game structures like this allows interactive play without complicated repair time, should it get knocked over.

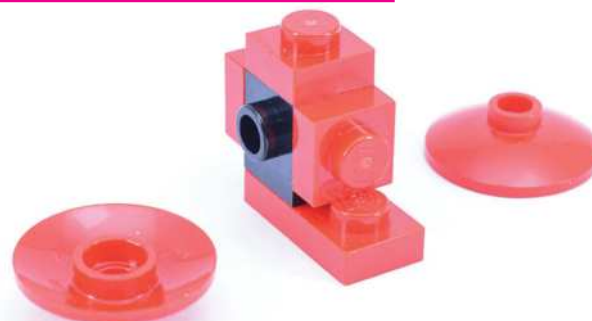
The official Snail's Pace Race game.



Simple piece structures are the best for game play.



Daleks are the ideal core element for game pieces.



Official LEGO dice elements are cheap to source.



Pizza tiles add elegance to the movement squares.



The 3D approach brings the game to life.



And now it's a race to the finish.



SHOBU

The complexity of this game, from a design point of view, lies in the pebble playing pieces. The technique shown here, as with the snail pieces earlier, utilises the dalek piece for the core structure. An extra stud is added to its base by utilising a Technic pin trick. Despite the fragile appearance of this larger unit, the final design remains exceptionally sturdy for playability needs.

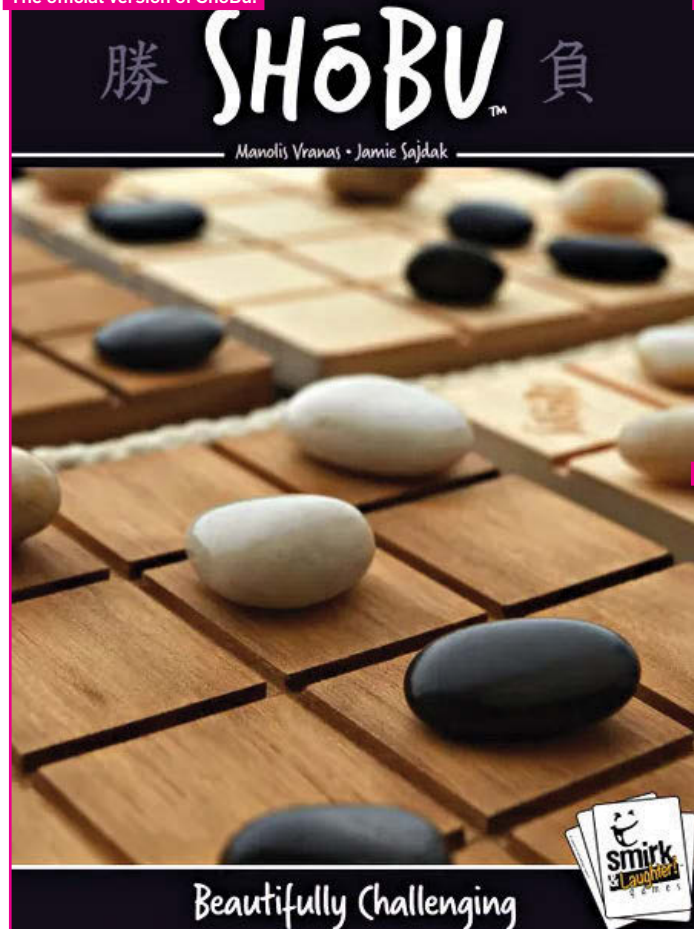
The board itself, as with the Snail's Pace Race, remains a simple studs-up formation. The spaces are simply denoted by a grid of recessed lines. While this invokes the style and feel of the game replicated in this feature, slots like this can actually help functions for games like Quorridor where walls are placed to block opponents progressing to certain squares.

The dividing rope featured in this game is replicated using mostly 1x1 round bricks. The ends are plain astromech droid head pieces. However, such a structure is flimsy to handle. The solution here is to insert flexible tubing. It also enables the rotation of stud directions so that the droid heads can be attached at both ends of the 'rope.'

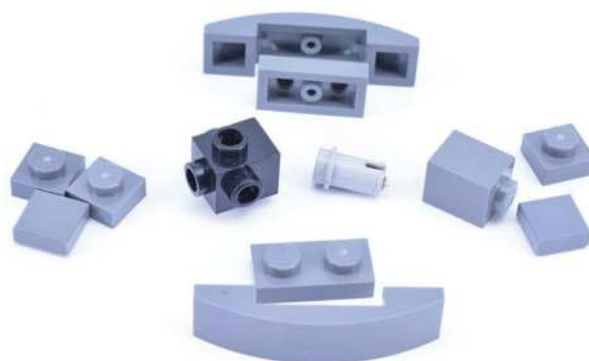
KEY CONCEPTS

You can create simple recesses to help denote playing surfaces while also providing perfect slot sizes for games where movable walls and segments might be needed. Rounded surfaces can be replicated by utilising the multiple studs on a dalek piece as a core.

The official version of ShoBu.



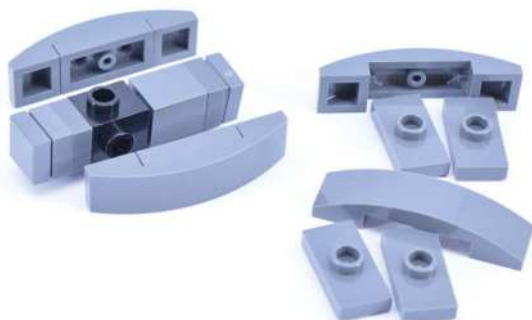
The dalek is a perfect core for playing piece designs.



The Technic pin creates a sixth stud direction.



1x4 bows create the long curvature.



The jumper plates help create a rounder middle.



The piece is exceptionally sturdy for game play.



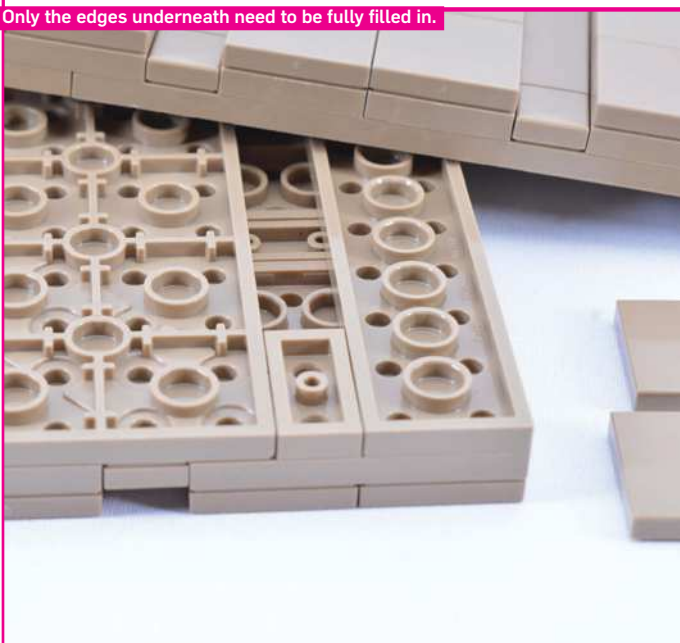
Board designs don't have to be over complicated.



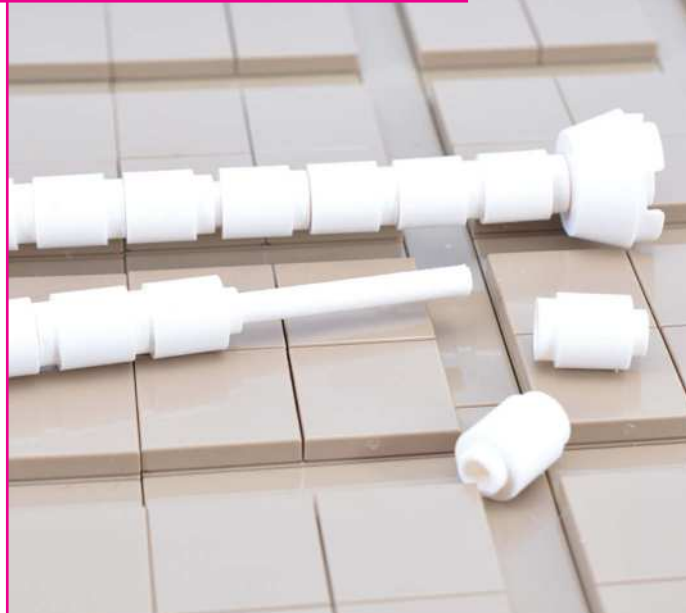
Layered plates and tiles for the grooved top.



Only the edges underneath need to be fully filled in.



Flexible tubing provides a stronger core for the 'rope'.



Now it's time to strategize.



TAFL

This game, also known as Viking chess, is a precursor to modern day chess. Squared game boards often don't feature the chequerboard design most notable in chess and draughts. While the lines that naturally appear between a grid 2x2 tiles can be enough to denote the same playing surface, there are benefits to being able to separate the tiles with a more defined grid system. For this game the pieces can be manoeuvred in a more fluid way with the increased gap between spaces.

The grey lines are created by using 2x2 tiles on their sides. Everything is trapped in place by an outer wall for the board. Underneath is a layer of tiles that the board 'squares' sit on. The 2x2 tiles sat sideways are the same height as five plates, so the outer wall is four plates and a tile in height. The brown and tan squares are place on top of a brick and single

2x2 plate. This is how everything then aligns smoothly for the final effect.

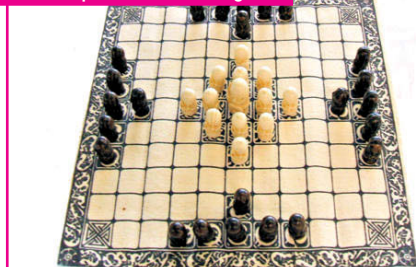
Games have different numbers of squares so do not always align perfectly as the one shown here.

The pieces shown for this game are a useful template for a wide variety of game tokens. The basic design again supports game functionality as parts are less likely to break. The internal bar not only aids the connection to the base but provides the rigid upper support for handling during play.

KEY CONCEPTS

Sideways construction generates interesting details. Remember that two studs travel the same distance as five plates when using sideways design features. You can also trap pieces together to form more intricate board patterns.

An example of the historic game.



Parts for a simple playing piece core.



The bar ensures it remains rigid during game play.



A great template from which to create other tokens.



The parts are trapped together



Time to save the king.



LUDUS LATRUNCULORUM

This Roman game is a natural extension of the previous concept. The number of squares this time means that the board does not fit snugly with the outer wall. The difficulty is overcoming the half plate gap that is left. This is resolved by slotting 1x2 panels half plate edge into the gap.

This game shows another benefit of creating clear grid lines, because some games like Go, Chinese chess and Shogi, sit their components on the

line joins instead. The simple game pieces shown are versatile for many games using basic tokens.

KEY CONCEPTS

There are many half plate size options in LEGO elements. Some have overlaying side stud edges on a half size plate, while other recess inwards by the same half plate.

The ancient games.



Panels must meet flush with the supporting walls.



1x2 panels fill the gap.



Tiles will then hide them.



A recessed take on the previous board design.



An option for a quick and elegant gaming token.



This roman game uses the squares so lines are less important.



Games like Go place pieces on line intersections instead.



NINE MEN'S MORRIS

This final game shows how complicated line structures can also be achieved utilising sideways construction. The key is learning how to do quick direction changes and understanding the array of parts that offer half plate adjustments. These pictures show you some of the methods underneath in comparison to the other examples.

These techniques have been more extensively explored in Issue 19's guide on making words and numbers in smooth, protruding or recessed surface finishes. Issue 98's guide will also be focusing on mosaic techniques that will translate well to this sort of board game construction

too.

The playing pieces utilise the fact that Technic pins fit inside 1x1 round and standard bricks. While not strictly necessary here, smooth finishes help people see it as a game more than a LEGO design.

KEY CONCEPT

The underside is a perfect location to hide the elements required to switch around the stud directions and fill in half plate gaps that often occur when designing intricate markings for a board game. ■

Parts for a small gaming token



The Technic pin with stud holds the token together.



A small but elegant playing piece.



The board from the top.



The changes in direction are hidden underneath.



The central section.



The structure underneath the centre section.



The finished effect.



It's easy to switch directions in big areas.



Ready to start moving.



Name: Simon Pickard
Flickr: brick.spartan

HORSE HITCHING

Harnessing horsepower helps a spacecraft reach for the stars

Words & Pics: Simon Pickard

ANIMAL ACCESSORIES ARE often highly specialised components. However, they still offer some very interesting shapes and connections that innovative and creative builders can latch onto. The horse hitching shown here is probably the most versatile and interesting of these elements.

It was used to create the exposed rear tail fin. The studs secure the main two portions together while the bar not only protrudes but supports additional connections for the horizontal fins, which are flag pieces.

The subtle angles achieved by using this piece for the tail helps compliment the angles of the wings too. The angular nature helps this spacecraft give off a menacing villain tone, which many fans associated with the beloved

LEGO Space Blacktron subtheme that informs the specific colour scheme employed here.

The dramatic shaping of this craft also helps to portray a sense of motion through the terrain

THE BAR NOT ONLY PROTRUDES BUT SUPPORTS ADDITIONAL CONNECTIONS

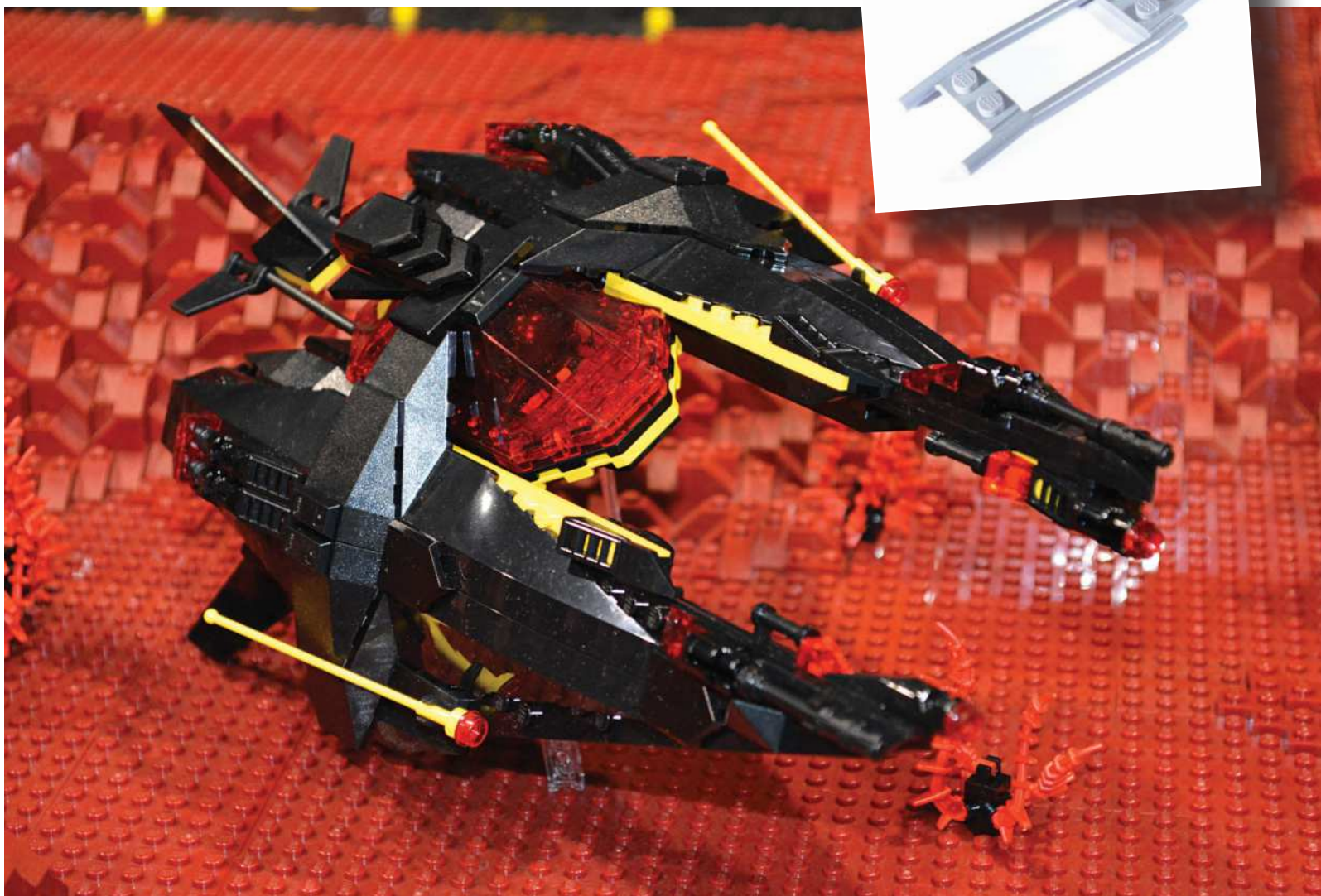
when propped up with transparent clear bars.

One of the most useful aspects of this featured element is the vast range of colours it can now be sourced in. It has also been produced by the LEGO Group constantly since its first use in 1987,

making it easy and to cheap source.

There are additional angular components featured in this build along with more innovative ones. You can see how the angled yellow whip antenna piece sticks out by being slightly misapplied, while stud shooters on the engine portion of the wings support Technic pins for a functional looking exterior greeble too.

The inclusion of the new transparent red cockpit screen and NEXO KNIGHTS shield pieces ensure the craft appears balanced in its tone and shape throughout. Of course the setting for any space craft is essential and the dark red terrain helps frame this short range Blacktron interceptor perfectly. ■



MOC&A // GAZE INTO THE FIST OF DREDD

A classic 2000 AD panel is blown up to a huge size using 1x1 LEGO tiles

Word: Graham Hancock **Pics:** Phil Wallis

All of the shading is captured.



AS PART OF Sheffield LUG's focus on 2000 AD builds, Kevin Hyatt decided to replicate a panel from one of his favourite Judge Dredd comic book stories. Rather than replicate it at a manageable size though, he decided to go big and ensure that convention attendees wouldn't miss the epic Fist of Dredd.

Blocks: How long have you been a fan of 2000 AD for?

Kevin: I've been a fan of 2000 AD for about 40 years now, ever since sneaking a read of my older brothers' progs (the 2000 AD verbiage for issues) as a young lad in the early 1980s. It instantly hooked me with its far flung futuristic, action packed strips that were worlds away from the Beano and Dandy comics I was used to.

What sparked the idea to do the mosaic?

Judge Dredd was my favourite due to the wacky world of Mega-City One and his whole 'I am the Law' schtick. As part of the Sheffield LUG Big Build Brigade we build something big each year, like the life sized jeep we built for last year. With 2022 being the 45th anniversary of 2000 AD we wanted to do something to commemorate the occasion. We have been working on vehicles, dioramas, a Mega-City One layout and my main contribution was to be a mosaic as a backdrop. Ask any Dredd fan which panel is the first they think of and 99% will instantly recall the 'Gaze into the Fist of Dredd' panel by Brian Bolland from the original Dark Judges storyline. It took me around two months in total to

complete the mosaic from choosing the art, designing the plan, sourcing the parts and building the plates that made up the artwork. I decided to go big and ended up creating the world's largest LEGO DOTS mosaic.

What has the response been like?

Its first outing was at London Film and Comic Con in July and it had an amazing response from the public. Those that recognised the art loved it

and those that didn't know it were drawn to it by the vastness of the piece.

There were many of the modern 2000 AD writers and artists at the con and all of them were very complimentary about the mosaic. Just a week after the show I received an email from Matt Smith, the current editor of 2000 AD – he had been shown a picture and he wanted to feature it in the magazine. It appeared in prog 2295 on August 16. ■

Kevin exhibiting the mosaic.



GAZE INTO THE FIST OF DREDD
Builder: Kevin Hyatt
Instagram: kevinhyatt

MOC IN PICS // OCTAN CHARGING STATION AND ROOFTOP NOODLE SHOP

The locals charge up their rides and eat noodles at this cyberpunk city corner

Word & Pics: Ted Andes

I BUILT THE Octan Charging Station and Rooftop Noodle Shop for a massive cyberpunk city layout planned for Brickworld Chicago 2023. The 'cube' frame that surrounds it is a newly developed modular standard that makes up

the structural foundation of the city. The cubes can be stacked, allow for the city layout to be expanded both horizontally and vertically as new contributors join in. The idea for this cube was to provide a place in the city for charging

futuristic hoverbikes, along with a convenience store/rooftop noodle shop where the riders can recharge themselves with food while they are waiting. ■



MOC&A // WELCOME TO FABULAND

A vintage biplane inspired Steve Laughlin to revisit a classic theme that fans have a special affection for

Word: Daniel Konstanski **Pics:** Steve Laughlin

ANYONE WHO GREW up with LEGO Fabuland imagined having a full-on layout for the theme's anthropomorphic characters to populate. So much of LEGO fandom is about fulfilling those childhood dreams and Steve Laughlin delighted fellow AFOLs with his Welcome to Fabuland layout at this year's conventions. It's a lengthy model that delivers a full Fabuland world of colour and whimsy.

Blocks: What was the inspiration for this build?

Steve: The evolution started with me wanting to collect the small Fabuland biplane aircraft from set 3630 Percy Pilot. Eventually, I found a

listing on eBay containing Fabuland set 3630, 3654 Country Cottage and a hand illustrated poster from one of the old Fabuland story books, The Fabuland Rainbow. That poster inspired

■ PRESERVING THE ORIGINAL STORYBOOK FEEL WAS CRITICAL ■

the MOC's early stages, I wanted to build what was on the poster and then show it. It grew legs from there. I had to have a city to go with the countryside and then I needed an airfield for the



town, a zoo, a pleasure pier sitting on the ocean and finally a lighthouse.

How long did it take to complete?

I acquired the poster in early 2019 and started collecting Fabuland parts from that point. It took three years of collecting all the elements, along with many hours of research on ideas I had, then about three months of hard building in the evenings. Finally, my wife and I finished



everything up in the early morning hours at the Brick Rodeo Convention in July 2022.

Did you have a large collection of Fabuland figures and parts to begin with?

I acquired everything during this build process. The first Fabuland item I ever purchased was that red biplane from 3630 Percy Pilot. I now have a majority of the sets and all the minifigures with the exception of a couple specialty printed figures from Australia.

Fabuland isn't a theme that gets a lot of attention at conventions, what has the response to such a unique layout been?

The response was amazing. The public enjoyed the build, especially the characters, and many were surprised to hear it was actually a LEGO theme. The AFOL community has been awesome and for them it was nostalgic. When you put a MOC together for a show you hope it will be well received – my wife and I were blown away by the love shown for this creation.

Fabuland has a very unique aesthetic, a sort of storybook whimsy, that you have really captured here. How did you achieve that?

Preserving the original storybook feel was critical. I wanted all the building areas to be original looking. In the end it's the modern landscaping techniques for trees, plants, roads, etcetera that wraps this all together. It's really all the landscaping in this build, old and new, that softens the hard edges of the original buildings and wall elements. That, coupled with

all the fun Fabuland figures, add that storybook life to the MOC.

What is your favourite aspect or detail of the build?

There is an expansive cobblestone roadwork connecting through the build's 16 48x48 baseplates. It took a lot of planning and then thousands upon thousands of round and square tiles laid down by my beautiful wife using a small template I made for her. My other favourite part of the build was the backdrop, which I wanted to match the illustrations of the theme. I used light aqua, which turned out to be a perfect colour once it was decorated with clouds and then laid up against Fabuland's green landscaping and primary colours. ■



Welcome to Fabuland in all its glory.

WELCOME TO FABULAND
 Builder: Steve Laughlin
 Flickr: Steve Laughlin

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REWIND



Prototype minifigures.

POWER MINERS

Rock Raiders' spiritual successor built on the foundations of its decade-old predecessor – with mixed results

Words: Chris Wharfe **Pics:** The LEGO Group, Daniel Konstanski

BY THE LATE 2000s and early 2010s, the LEGO Group was pumping out original themes left, right and centre. The post-BIONICLE landscape had given the company's creatives a confident grasp on how to make a product line cohesive, from its visuals and design language through to its lore and overarching narrative. This was a time of in-house ideas being properly fleshed out, even in themes that only hung around for a couple of years. Among those was Power Miners, a spiritual successor to 1999's Rock Raiders.

Pertinently, that classic theme (already covered in Issue 61's Blockstalgia) arrived a year before BIONICLE, and so didn't benefit from the strong storytelling that the LEGO Group imbued into later big bang themes. When Power Miners debuted in 2009, it gave Billund's brightest the chance to take Rock Raiders and build a consistent and comprehensive world around its team of (all male) miner minifigures.

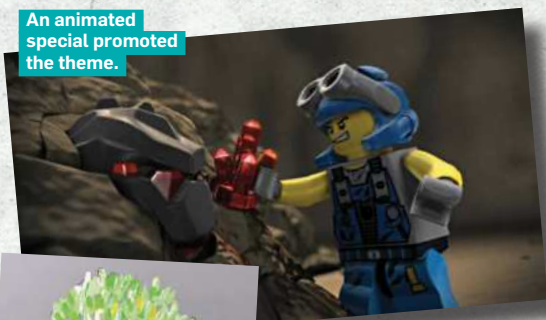
Okay, it was never going to set the literary world on fire, but Power Miners' premise – a group of specialist miners collecting underground crystals to prevent mischievous rock monsters from causing earthquakes above ground – gave it a clear hook around which to anchor its vibrant sets, all of which followed specific visual cues. Its colours were an acquired

taste (lime green and orange vehicles, grey and trans yellow/red/green monsters, and blue-suited minifigures made for an eclectic mix), but they ensured cohesion across the entire range.

It wasn't just the hues that took some getting used to, though – Power Miners' sets were emblematic of the LEGO Group's design direction in the late 2000s through to the mid 2010s, mashing up mega-moulded parts with traditional LEGO elements (in those aforementioned groovy colours) to create truly unique – and often bizarre – models. The DNA of NEXO KNIGHTS and even early NINJAGO subthemes can be felt in sets like 8959 Claw Digger and 8962 Crystal King.

By its second year, the LEGO Group was already beginning to wind down Power Miners – both in quantity of products and in design, stripping out the bright orange for a more subdued mix of lime green and grey. Just four relatively small sets landed on shelves in 2010, pitting the miners (now equipped with silver – and presumably heat-proof – armour) against neon orange lava monsters. Like so many of that glut of in-house themes at the time, Power Miners ultimately fizzled out, but it was fun seeing the LEGO Group experiment. Especially if you were already nostalgic for Rock Raiders...

An animated special promoted the theme.



Rock monster concept sketch.



The monsters came big and small.





MEMORY LANE

'I SHOULD HAVE BEEN A PRIME CANDIDATE FOR POWER MINERS'

POWER MINERS ULTIMATELY CAME TOO EARLY TO BE AN EFFECTIVE NOSTALGIA TRIP FOR CHRIS

For most people, the end of the 20th century was a time of renewal, hope, excitement and a vague fear of Y2K. For me, 1999 was all about two things – LEGO Star Wars and LEGO Rock Raiders. Six-year-old me was enamoured with both, and while only one hung around (for me and everyone else), I've always had a soft spot for the simplistic rock monsters, giant chrome drills and enormous wheelbases that epitomised Rock Raiders.

Fast forward to 2009, and I should have been a prime candidate for collecting every single Power Miners set. Except I was only 16, at serious risk of moving into a dark age and with absolutely no spare cash to devote to LEGO collecting.

It was arguably too soon to cash in on Rock Raiders nostalgia (there's a reason this year's 90th anniversary sets focus on 1980s themes), and given Power Miners' garish colour scheme, diminutive rock monsters and (at times) questionable designs, there was only ever going to be one outcome. I skipped the entire theme and have zero desire to revisit it today. If I'm ever feeling like a LEGO journey underground, I'll stick with Rock Raiders.

BREAKING DOWN THE THEME



- Power Miners introduced several new elements, including the 3D dynamite piece – upgrading the printed 1x2 tile that had been around since Western.
- The theme was accompanied by three video games and a Power Miners movie, all of which are now offline and unavailable.
- Several Power Miners sets could be combined into larger models using official instructions published online.



MEMORY LANE

'MY DAUGHTER FELL IN LOVE WITH THE LITTLE ROCK MONSTERS'

POWER MINERS WAS THE FIRST REAL LEGO EXPERIENCE FOR DANIEL'S OLDEST DAUGHTER

By the time Power Miners came along in 2009, I was well and truly an adult – as evidenced by having a child on the way. It wasn't until my first daughter was two years old that I turned my attention to the LEGO Group's underground theme and began snatching up the sets right before they vanished entirely from shelves. Because of this, they were some of the first official models she was exposed to, and she fell in love with the little rock monsters – which only encouraged me to get more Power Miners sets.

My daughter assembled all of the rock monsters into a little underground nursery where she would feed them out of bottles and dress them in little bits of toilet paper and clay. It was hilarious to watch. Thanks to Power Miners proving the concept, I quickly started getting other sets for her, including both Star Wars and Friends – launching a childhood full of LEGO play.

BY THE NUMBERS YEARS ACTIVE:

2009 - 2010

1

SET NAME BORROWED DIRECTLY FROM ROCK RAIDERS, 8958 GRANITE GRINDER

3

PROMOTIONAL POLYBAGS, ONE OF WHICH WAS ONLY AVAILABLE IN SELECT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

16

REGULAR RETAIL SETS RELEASED OVER THREE WAVES

4

NAMED MINERS, INCLUDING DOC, REX, DUKE AND BRAINS

11

UNIQUE ROCK MONSTERS (ALL NAMED), PLUS ONE BRICK-BUILT CRYSTAL KING

REVIEW

Aftermarket price: £29 new, £6 used / **Minifigures:** 1 / **Pieces:** 31

8956 **STONE CHOPPER**

IT'S ONLY 13 years old, but Power Miners' smallest set is already something of a time capsule – there was a surprising amount of plastic in the box for just £3.99 / \$5.99, including the catchily-named Meltrox (wonder what he specialised in?), a Duke minifigure and a vague approximation of a mining-themed bike.

The build is nothing to write home about and the vehicle didn't play a major part in the overarching Power Miners narrative, but 8956 Stone Chopper was a sweet taste of the theme's essentials for a pocket money price. And it still is today – as long as you buy used.



A small set, packed with the theme's prominent colours.

Aftermarket price: £64 new, £38 used / **Minifigures:** 1 / **Pieces:** 225

8963 **ROCK WRECKER**

WHILE SOME OF the Power Miners vehicles have their roots in real-world forms (see 8956 Stone Chopper), others are completely original – and completely zany. 8963 Rock Wrecker falls firmly into the latter category. It arrived alongside the theme's second wave in summer 2009, all giant saw blades and, erm, coffee machine (the miners need to be well-equipped for long stretches underground.)

The product description touts the Rock Wrecker's net shooter and dynamite launcher (a flick-fire missile with a stick of dynamite on the end), but it's Geolix's rock-throwing arm that steals the show, activated by a lever on his back. The 'yellow rock-throwing monster', as he's referred to by the LEGO Group, is one of Power Miners' more impressive baddies – towering above the theme's smaller rock monsters and going a long way to justifying the set's retail price of £24.99.

The spinning saw blades across its front bumper, which rotate as the vehicle moves, give the Rock Wrecker a little more character – you can genuinely see this thing wrecking some rocks, and in turn, a rock monster. Otherwise, it feels emblematic of Power Miners' haphazard aesthetic, jamming multiple oversized elements into a gappy and unsatisfying build that struggles to convey a cohesive visual identity.

Those swirling saw blades aren't hiding prominent Technic beams.



Aftermarket price: £308 new, £136 used / **Minifigures:** 3 / **Pieces:** 637

8709 UNDERGROUND MINING STATION

THE SECOND LARGEST Power Miners set of them all channels 4990 The Rock Raiders HQ only insofar as concept – otherwise, it's a complete departure from its ancestor that perhaps best demonstrates the enormous shift in LEGO design principles between 1999 and 2009. That's most obvious in 8709 Underground Mining Station's massive footprint, facilitated by a base comprised of multiple smaller plates, while the Rock Raiders headquarters sits on a huge 3D baseplate (which had mostly been shelved by the late 2000s).

8709 also feels far more assured of the concept it's trying to present, leaning into the mining theme with two huge towers linked by a pulley system. This is the set's biggest hook – a huge cable along which crystals can be transported from the control tower to the lookout tower, then dropped through a shaft into a receptacle at its base. It can be controlled by either a smaller black gear element on one side of the lookout tower, or the giant green wheel on the other side. We know which option is more fun.

For its size – and a middling part count mostly devoted to achieving it – 8709 packs in plenty of details, too, from crystals and carrots to a walkie-talkie and fire extinguisher. It's perhaps

the most successful Power Miners set at genuinely communicating the power mining aspect of the theme, and both aesthetically and in execution of its concept is an almost unique product in the entire LEGO line-up.

But it's not all good news – the limitations of Power Miners' minimal character roster are definitely showing here. The requisite rock monster is Geolix, too, who also shows up in

what was the much cheaper 8963 Rock Wrecker – a second rock monster could have gone a long way, especially given the scope of this set. And the less said about those flick-fire dynamite missiles, the better...

Still, there's a reason this set fetches high prices on the aftermarket – you just won't find any other LEGO set like it.



The Power Miners are an expressive bunch.



It's a huge, functional base of operations.

RE-BUILD

ROCK MONSTER

Capture the cartoony look of the crystal-gobbling rock monsters using modern bricks

Words and Pics: Daniel Konstanski

BACK WHEN POWER Miners hit shelves, figures other than minifigures were unusual. Today, nearly every new theme has creatures or beings that break the minifigure mould, but it was still noteworthy when the small, stout little fellas with a penchant for eating crystals stormed on to the scene. According to Power Miners lore, these rock monsters lived deep underground and consumed energy crystals, which caused them to release kinetic energy into the caverns around them.

As such, the most notable feature was a hinged top that allowed them to open their comparatively gaping mouths and have a crystal element placed inside. This build imagines what would happen if these original monsters got a little bigger. The design brief included retaining their barrel shape and gaping mouths, as well as the dual-coloured textures of their bodies.



Start with the feet.



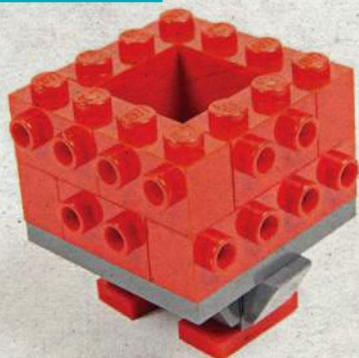
The beast needs two.



Attach them to the centre of a 4x4 plate.



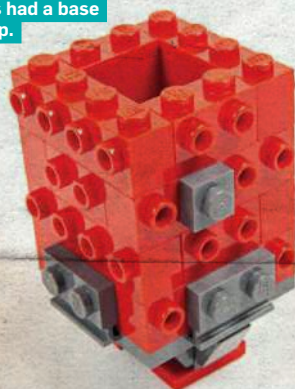
Build the body with side stud bricks.



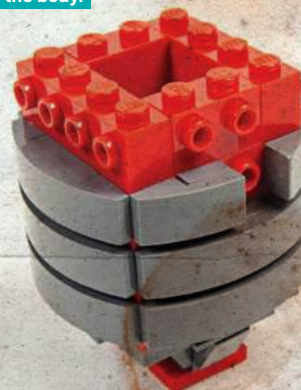
Alternate 1x4 and 1x2 bricks to build up the body.



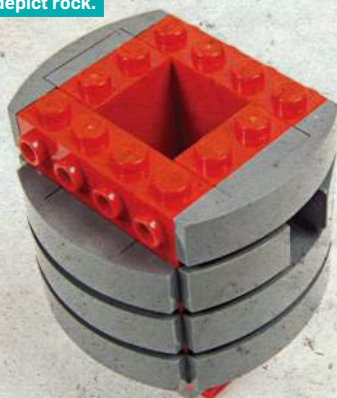
The original creatures had a base colour with grey on top.



Add curved bricks to the body.



Curved elements depict rock.



The head will attach to this.



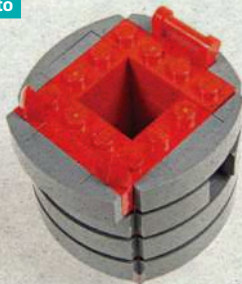
This is the monster's front jaw.



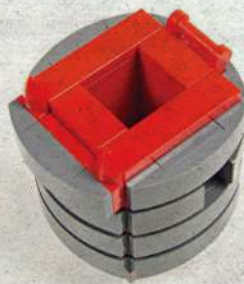
The teeth are red.



Attach these two constructs to the top of the body.



Tiles will allow the mouth to open.



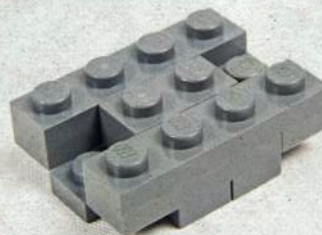
Start constructing the head.



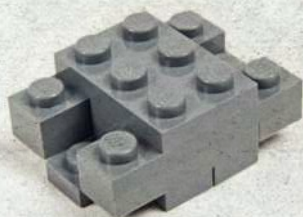
Build up the head.



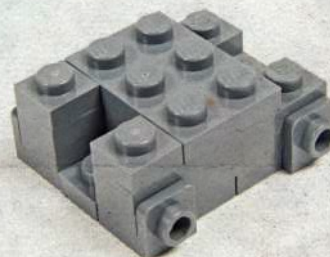
Add a 1x2 and two 1x4s.



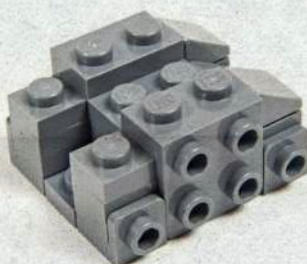
Top with a 2x3 plate.



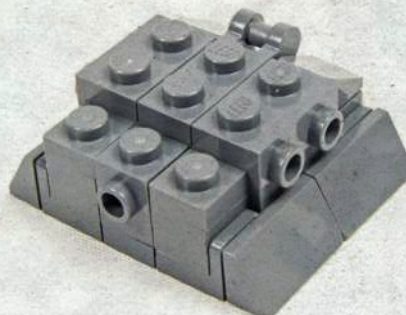
Add one stud brackets...



...and larger brackets on top.



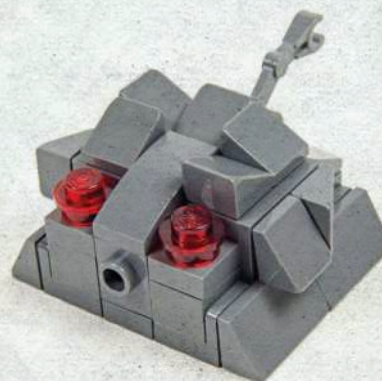
Continue as shown.



Eyes and texture come next.



Add some slopes.



A nose and eyebrows complete the look.



Clip the head into the body.



The arms come next.



Build two of these.



This is the upper arm section.



Top arm section complete.



Next comes the lower section.

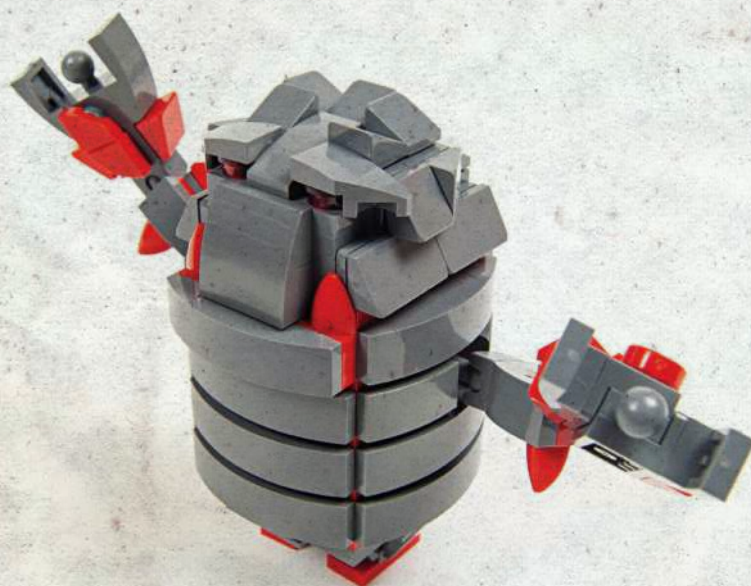
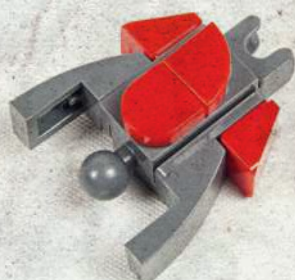


Again, build two of these.



Attach the arms and go gobble some crystals.

Complete the arm.



Blocks

BRICKIONARY

The language of LEGO has a wide, varied and ever-growing vocabulary. Blocks magazine helps you to decode it

A

ABS: Acrylonitrile butadiene styrene. The plastic most LEGO parts are made from.

AFOL: Adult Fan of LEGO.

B

Billund: Town in Denmark where the the LEGO Group was founded and the headquarters is located.

Bley: Bluish grey. Refers to the current LEGO grey, compared to the old version (known as... old grey).

BrickLink: The online marketplace for buying and selling LEGO bricks, now owned by the LEGO Group.

Brickset: An online database of LEGO sets.

Brick Train Awards: Annual fan organised train building contest.

BURP: Big Ugly Rock Piece. Moulded piece five bricks high with jagged edges.

C

Cheese Slope: A sloping LEGO part, named after the fact yellow pieces look like a wedge of cheese.

Clone Brands: Knock-off construction toys that copy aspects of, or sometimes entire, official LEGO sets.

Custom: A LEGO creation or individual element that uses non-LEGO parts, modified parts or accessories from third party vendors like BrickArms or BrickForge.

Customiser: A LEGO fan who's not afraid to modify LEGO parts. Customising may include painting, cutting, drilling, melting or adding non-LEGO parts to a creation. Considered heresy to the purist LEGO fan.

D

D2C: Direct to Consumer sets. Generally exclusive to LEGO stores, with high piece counts.

Dark Ages: The period in a LEGO fan's life when they set aside LEGO in favour of other, non-LEGO pursuits.

Draft: An activity common at LEGO

club meetings in which fans each bring a LEGO set, sort out all the elements and then take turns in picking out the type of part they want. An easy way to obtain parts in large quantities without buying multiple parts of the set yourself.

E

Erling: A 1x1 brick with one stud on its recessed side, named after its designer.

Evergreen: A theme that returns year after year, rather than only being available for one or two years.

G

Greeble: Pseudo-technical detail added to a LEGO creation to enhance its appearance, often seen in LEGO Space and Mecha creations.

GWP: Gift with purchase. A promotional item or set obtained by spending a minimum amount at LEGO Stores or LEGO.com.

H

Half-Stud Offset: A building technique that allows building without regards to standard alignment of studs on a plate, usually achieved with a jumper plate.

I

Ideas: Platform for fans to upload set ideas with the potential for them to become official LEGO releases.

Illegal: LEGO building techniques that break the 'rules' for connections between LEGO elements used by official LEGO set designers, particularly connections that stress the LEGO elements.

Inventory: The list of LEGO elements included in an official LEGO set. Several LEGO fan sites host set inventories including Peeron, Brickset and BrickLink.

IP: Intellectual property. The LEGO Group has many IP partners, such as Disney and Nintendo.

J

Jumper Plate: A 1x2 or 2x2 LEGO plate with only one stud in the centre. Useful for half-stud offset building.

K

KFOL: Kid Fan of LEGO. The LEGO Group's primary target demographic of between 5-12 years.

L

LCP: LEGO Certified Professional. A professional brick builder authorised by and affiliated with the LEGO Group.

LDD: LEGO Digital Designer. Free software for PC and Mac that lets you build LEGO models virtually.

Legal: LEGO building techniques that follow guidelines for official LEGO set designers.

LEGOLAND: Family theme parks inspired by the LEGO brand. The original location is in Billund, but now found all around the world.

LEGO Masters: The competitive televised building contest, with local versions airing globally.

LEGOs: Incorrect plural of LEGO.

LLDC: LEGOLAND Discovery Centre. A mini, indoor versions of the theme parks aimed specifically at children.

LUG: LEGO User Group. Local or regional LEGO clubs that meet and interact primarily in an offline 'real-world' context. This is changing as the number of online LUGs grows.

M

Microfig: Small figures, like those in the LEGO Games series.

Midi Scale: Refers to sets that are between miniature and minifigure scale. They do not include minifigures but are more detailed than mini sets. So far only Star Wars sets have midi versions.

Minifigure Scale: A LEGO creation built for the scale of standard LEGO minifigures.

MOC: My Own Creation. A model designed and built by a LEGO fan without instructions. Often used as a verb, 'MOCing'.

Mod: A modification of an official LEGO set, usually changing part colours or



adding to original designs.

N

NPU: Nice part usage. Taking a LEGO element and using it a new or unexpected way, usually different to the way it is most commonly used.

P

PAB: Pick-A-Brick. Buying individual bricks in the quantities needed from the LEGO Group's online or physical stores.

PAB Wall: The Pick-A-Brick wall found at official LEGO stores.

Purist: A LEGO fan who only uses official LEGO elements. Can be applied to LEGO creations that only contain official LEGO elements with no modifications or custom parts.

S

S@H or SAH: The official online store, LEGO.com. Used to be Shop at Home.

Sigfig: The minifigure version of a LEGO fan that is used in online communities as an avatar or 'signature minifigure'.

SNOT: Studs Not On Top. A building technique that places elements on their sides or even upside down to achieve a smooth surface.

T

TFOL: Teen Fan of LEGO.

TLG: The LEGO Group, the privately held parent company for all LEGO-related brands and companies worldwide.

TMA: Too many acronyms.

TRU: Toys R Us.

U

UCS: Ultimate Collector Series. A line of large LEGO Star Wars sets designed for older teens and adults.

V

Vignette: A small scene recreated on a square plate, generally 8x8 studs.

W

WIP: Work in progress, usually referring to a MOC.

BASIC BRICKS

Baseplates: The foundation for many projects, be it houses, space bases or castles. They're normally thin plates with no connections underneath so you can only build on top. Some older sets included raised baseplates resembling rocks, hills and other landscaping.

Bricks: At the core of LEGO is the basic brick. They come in a wide range of sizes, usually denoted by their stud pattern – i.e. 2x2, 2x6 – and in a huge colour palette.

Measurements: LEGO fans usually refer to parts by the number of studs they have. For example, a brick that has two studs on the short side and four studs on the longer side would be called a 2x4 brick.

Plates: Thinner than bricks but not as thin as baseplates. Three plates stacked together equals the height of one standard brick. Can be joined from above or below like standard bricks.

Printed Parts: Can be bricks, plates or tiles. They come with printed designs, often referred to as decorated parts.

Studs: The fundamental joining method of basic LEGO bricks.

Tiles: Thin, like plates but without any studs on top (see SNOT).

■ If you can think of a widely-used LEGO term that's not in the Brictionary, drop us a line at graham@blocksmag.com to get it included.



LEGO EVENTS

Do you run a physical or virtual event that should be listed here? Get in touch with us via graham@blocksmag.com and we'll add it to the list

NOVEMBER 2022

Shildon Brick Show (UK)

When: November 5 – 6

Where: Locomotion Museum, Shildon, County Durham

What's on: The UK's largest free entry LEGO show – LEGO displays from builders across the UK, activities and a marketplace.

Visit: brickalleylug.co.uk/shildon

Bristol Brick Show (UK)

When: November 19 – 20

Where: Gloucestershire County Cricket Club, Bristol

What's on: LEGO exhibitions and activities.

Visit: gertlug.co.uk/eventst

DECEMBER 2022

Monkey Bricks (UK)

When: December 4

Where: Civic Centre, Heywood

What's on: A one-day fan event with LEGO model displays, marketplace and activities.

Visit: facebook.com/groups/760519838304049

Train Show (USA)

When: December 10 – 11

Where: Cantigny Park, Wheaton, Illinois

What's on: Produced by the Northern Illinois LEGO Train Club, it is the group's largest annual show with large scale train displays.

Visit: cantigny.org

Brick Fest Live (USA)

When: December 3 – 4

Where: Meadowlands Exposition Center, Secaucus, New Jersey

What's on: Life-sized models, live interactive stage shows, building activities and photo ops.

Visit: brickfestlive.com

Brick Fest Live (USA)

When: December 10 – 11

Where: Oklahoma City Convention Center, Oklahoma

What's on: Life-sized models, live interactive stage shows, building activities and photo ops.

Visit: brickfestlive.com

Brick Fest Live (USA)

When: December 17 – 18

Where: RMB Regional Fairgrounds, Robstown, Texas

What's on: Life-sized models, live interactive stage shows, building activities and photo ops.

Visit: brickfestlive.com

JANUARY 2023

Thirsk Brick Show (UK)

When: January 16 – 17

Where: Thirsk & Sowerby Town Hall, North Yorkshire

What's on: In aid of Holy Rood House in Thirsk. LEGO fan displays, traders and activities.

Visit: brickalleylug.co.uk/thirsk

Calder Valley Brick Show (UK)

When: January 29

Where: Mytholmroyd Community & Leisure Centre, Mytholmroyd

What's on: Professional model displays, competitions and trade stalls.

Visit: brickshowtickets.co.uk

FEBRUARY 2023

Thin Blue Bricks (UK)

When: February 18

Where: Hamilton, South Lanarkshire

What's on: LEGO displays in aid of Care Of Police Survivors (COPS).

Visit: facebook.com/Thin-Blue-Bricks-120467866024378

Bricktastic (UK)

When: February 24 – 25

Where: Manchester Central Convention Centre, Manchester

What's on: The biggest LEGO fan event in the UK, with exhibits from builders around the UK, Europe and America, all in aid of Fairy Bricks charity.

Visit: bricktastic.org

MARCH 2023

Brickish Weekend (UK)

When: March 11 – 12

Where: National Space Centre, Leicester

What's on: The long-running show returns to

the Midlands with a range of LEGO models from builders across the UK, including space themed displays.

Visit: spacecentre.co.uk

Cobblers Brick Show (UK)

When: March 25

Where: Caroline Chisholm School, Northampton

What's on: This LEGO show in aid of charity is back again in Northampton.

Visit: facebook.com/CobblersBrickShow

APRIL 2023

Black Country Brick Show (UK)

When: April 1 – 2

Where: Phoenix Collegiate Academy, West Bromwich

What's on: LEGO displays and activities with this fundraising event for Fairy Bricks and Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity.

Visit: facebook.com/BlackCountryBrickShow

Yorkshire Brick Show (UK)

When: April 15 – 16

Where: York Racecourse, York

What's on: A new venue for this showcase of LEGO builders from Yorkshire and beyond. In aid of Fairy Bricks.

Visit: facebook.com/BrickshireLUG

Ware's The Bricks (UK)

When: April 15 – 16

Where: Ware Priory & Event Centre, Ware

What's on: This long-running fundraising event is back for 2023 in Hertfordshire.

Visit: facebook.com/WaresTheBricks

BRICKSMcGEE

PLAYFUL SINCE 2012

FROM THE VAULT

The LEGO Group ventured away from children and towards architects with a short-lived product line in the 1960s

Words & Pics: Daniel Konstanski

THE 1950S AND 1960s are a fascinating time period in the LEGO Group's history. The company was still relatively small during those years and the analogue world in which it existed meant that records had to be kept physically rather than digitally. Accordingly, it is sometimes difficult, or even impossible, to ascertain all of the various details around a given theme. Such is the case with Scale Line, a short-lived experiment that came and went in the early 1960s.

What is well established about Scale Line is that it was targeted at older builders, intended to give them the ability to create realistic buildings. This is attested to by box art which shows architectural prints alongside LEGO bricks against an appealing grey background; definitely more refined than other box images from the period that focused on drawing a child's eyes.

Plate elements were created for this product so that more subtle shapes could be achieved in pursuit of that more detailed building experience. It was anticipated that families might use Scale Line products to map out houses or other structures they wanted to build at full scale in the real world. Official LEGO literature is quick to observe in any discussion

of Scale Line that it came out at a time when Danish families were caught up in the dream of building their own homes.

What is unknown pertains to exactly how big Godtfred Kirk Christiansen and LEGO management hoped Scale Line would be. There are stories suggesting this product line would allow the company to branch out from its image as a 'toy maker'. Other anecdotes suggest Scale Line was envisioned as a whole new tool that would permeate the architecture industry, allowing professionals to render their ideas in 3D rather than just on paper. Another recollection suggests this was the first intentional effort to rope adults into interacting with LEGO bricks on their own, beyond playing with their children.

Whatever the truth, the reality is that none of those dreams came to be as Scale Line failed to take off and was quietly cancelled just a couple of years after its debut. However, as nearly every LEGO set since has included plate elements, it is no exaggeration to say that Scale Line is an absolutely essential part of LEGO history. ■

A Scale Line display model built to help market the theme and showcase how it could be used.



Box art for a Scale Line set.



750 63

The packaging makes clear that this isn't a toy.



752-63

NEXT MONTH

IN SHOPS DECEMBER 1

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